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A

FAIRY TALE.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
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AND PARLIAMENT STREET

UNCLE PETER'S

FAIRY TALE

FOR THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY.

EDITED BY

ELIZABETH M. SEWELL,

AUTHORESS OF 'AMY HERBERT,' 'HOME LIFE,'
'AFTER LIFE,' ETC.

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1869.

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PREFACE.

THE following Tale was originally written for the amusement of private friends. Before it could be fitted for more general circulation, certain alterations were required, which the writer of this Preface undertook to make.

For these she is responsible, as well as for urging the publication of the Tale; but it can scarcely be necessary to add that the credit of its authorship is not in the slightest degree to be given to her.

BONCHURCH : *Nov.* 30, 1868.

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A FAIRY TALE

FOR THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAIRY.

THE FOLLOWING REMARKABLE STORY was related by Peter Pumpkin, Esq., usually known by the name of Uncle Peter, to a select party of friends assembled at Pumpkin Hall to keep Christmas. Its correctness, as taken down at the time from his own lips, is undoubted; and those who have the pleasure of Mr. Pumpkin's acquaintance can have no doubt of his veracity.

You know, my dear friends (so it was Uncle Peter commenced his tale), that Fairies are by no means as common now as they used to be; and therefore it is not as easy to obtain true and correct stories of them. Many persons account for their disappearance by their dislike to travelling by railroads, and reading the *Times*

newspaper. And perhaps this may have something to do with it. But whatever the cause may be, it is certain they have retired from most of the counties of England, except Cumberland and Westmoreland, and perhaps Cornwall. Along the valley of the Thames they are quite extinct. One, it has been said, was seen two years since on Salisbury Plain, near Amesbury, by a ploughboy who was going home late in the evening after Amesbury Fair; but there is some doubt whether this was not really a monkey, which had escaped from a show or caravan. In Ireland they are still most plentiful, and every Saturday night numbers of them are seen by the Irish peasants, as they go home from market. And in Scotland also they are numerous, though I cannot help thinking that the grouse-shooting every year, and the Queen going to Balmoral, has had a tendency to disturb them, and reduce their number. But the one with whom I became acquainted lived in Wales, in a beautiful valley opening out of the great Shropshire Plain. She had apparently withdrawn from public life from circumstances connected with the rapid spread of civilisation in that district. Some imagined the cause to be a quarrel with the new police, or an annoyance from the Commissioners of Paving, or a difficulty in paying the assessed taxes, or the sound of some spinning jennies which had been heard in the neighbouring town. Others said that

she had received a notice from the Commissioners of the Income Tax, others that she had been called up for a Competitive Examination, others that she had been criticised in the *Saturday Review*, and had even appeared in a caricature in *Punch*. But whatever was the cause, she had, I say, withdrawn entirely from public notice, and now lived retired among the mountains in that beautiful chasm of rock which lies on the north-north-east side of Pendragon Forest, and close by the famous waterfall of Pylwl-dwmlwl.*

It was in the autumn of 18— that the events occurred which I am now about to record. I was then staying with a very dear old friend of mine in that neighbourhood—Sir Lloyd Lloyd. His house —Brooklyn—was charmingly situated on a grassy bank, backed by a noble grove of oaks, and commanded one of the loveliest views on the borders of Wales.

The valley which it overlooked, was formed of green knolls, dotted with spreading oaks, and enclosed by wide amphitheatres of ferny hills, almost approaching to mountains; and the sides of which were hung with noble woods. In front lay a rich expanse of meads, glittering here and there with the mazy

* Generally pronounced Pilooldoomlool; or, at least, something as akin to that singular name as our English instructions for pronouncing 'je ne sais pas' like *Jenny say Pa.*

currents of the Lug, and terminated by a grove of poplars, almost concealing the little town of Rayadil; though above the poplars appeared the old grey square tower of the church.

The whole landscape was one peculiarly suited to the taste of a fairy. And though the fairy Polypragmosyne (such was her full name, though for brevity I have heard her called by those who knew her well Polly Prag) actually resided, as I said, by the side of Pendragon Forest, close by the great waterfall, she often came down into Rayadil valley; and I have been told that at one time she intended (if Sir Lloyd would part with the property) to settle on an ancient seat of her family, a circle in the turf not far from the solitary and impassable road called Dolly's Lane. This meditated change in her abode was, I have reason to know, suggested to her by hearing that one of the most learned gentlemen in Wales, or indeed in England, Sir Wheatstone Willis, had lately published a profound work, exploding all existing belief in Æsop's Fables and Egyptian Astronomy. She felt strongly that such incredulity might probably extend to herself, and dreading to wake some morning and find herself annihilated by an octavo volume denying the reality of fairies, and therefore to be no longer in existence, she determined to change her residence. I suspect, though I am not sure, that it was this wish which

led to the facts I am about to relate, for they commenced with a perfectly unsolicited act of kindness on her part; and though nothing is more common among men and women than doing kindnesses without any idea of a return, my impression is, that fairies generally contemplate a reciprocity, and give only in hopes of receiving.

We were sitting, then, one fine afternoon, about five o'clock—(how well I remember the bright sky, the green meadows in which the cattle were grazing, the view of the valley up towards that strange hump-like mountain which terminates Pendragon Forest, and the bubbling and brawling of Norbury Brook under the bank)—we were sitting, I say, under the great Wych Elm on the east terrace—but I must first tell you who *we* were. I was of course there myself; there were besides, Lady Lloyd, with Mrs. Aberleigh, her mother, and Miss Rosa Aberleigh, her niece; also Mrs. Beaumont, a widow lady of great learning and worth, but with a certain gravity of demeanour, consequent, it was rumoured, upon unhappiness in her married life; and also an old friend of the family, Mr. Heathorn, the great philosopher, and Mrs. Heathorn, and a curious old man, who was said to have been once a Professor, or something of that kind, at Cambridge, and who went hobbling about with a walking-stick and umbrella—for he had been ill, and had almost lost the use of his limbs. I remember he always

brought the umbrella in to dinner with him to help him across the hall, and I used to expect that he would put it up between the courses. These, and little Emma, Mrs. Aberleigh's daughter, a child between ten and eleven years of age, formed the party staying in the house.

We were, then, as I said, on this afternoon—the 29th of August—sitting out on the terrace; and as we had passed the day without any food, except a copious meat breakfast at nine, and a meat luncheon at half-past one, and were not to dine till half-past six, Lady Lloyd, with her usual kindness, was restoring our exhaustion by tea and bread-and-butter, according to the prevailing fashion. A few of the party had been playing at croquet (the name of which game I confess always puzzled me, till I discovered that it was the feminine gender for cricket), and as we were resting and drinking tea, little Emma came running up the path which led to the gardens, her hat thrown back off her head, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes radiant with wonder and delight. She was followed by the great Newfoundland dog, Juno, who always accompanied her in her walks, but who, I regret to learn by the last letter I received from Brooklyn, is now dead.

'Oh, mamma!' she cried, 'whom do you think I have just seen?'

We were of course full of curiosity.

'It was Lady Shropshire,' said Miss Rosa.

'It was the Baroness,' said Mrs. Beaumont.

There happened to be a most excellent Marchioness, and an accomplished Baroness, her niece, living in the neighbourhood, at Woodleigh Park, and they being the great people of the county, naturally stood for the unique *her*, or *they*, when no one else was specifically named.

'It was Mrs. O'Brien,' said Mrs. Heathorn.

'Or rather Farmer Flail's sick baby,' said Mr. Heathorn, rather sarcastically, this baby being a perpetual and rather tedious subject of conversation to the benevolent ladies of the party.

'It was the Fairy!' exclaimed Emma, whose nonretentive powers were much on a par with those of her sex in general.

'The what!' cried Mr. Heathorn, with a philosophical look of the most scornful unbelief—'the what!'

'The Fairy,' repeated Emma; 'the same, I am sure, that Dr. Deane saw the other day, for it was close by the spot where she spoke to him.'

Now it was very true that the poor old Doctor had told us, about a week before, that he had met a fairy near the Weir, and he had repeated what she had said to him, and he to her. But as it was in verses with rhymes at the end of them, we had taken it for granted that, like poetry in general, it was all a mere invention.

Now, however, that the fact was corroborated to us, there could be little doubt of the Doctor's perfect veracity.

And yet, to confess the truth, though we had often heard of fairies, and had lately talked a good deal about them, there was a slight difficulty in the minds of some of the party in recognising their actual existence. I, however, was not amongst the number of the incredulous. I had seen several circles on the grass, close by the Mill Hill Plantation, and this, I had always been told, was an infallible sign of them ; and within a few days I had seen in the wood by the house no less than three strange and rare creatures, such as, I had been informed, are seldom found except in the countries where fairies live : these were a white horned owl, a heron, and a young hedgehog, about as big as a small teacup. The last of these you must bear in mind, because it was connected with the Fairy's subsequent act. It had come out suddenly, and in a very mysterious manner, from under the great yew tree on the terrace, and—by what I must ever consider a most rash proceeding—had obtained access to the interior of the house. For Mrs. Aberleigh—generally a most sensible woman—having forgotten how dangerous it is to allow strangers admission into a family circle, had thoughtlessly taken up this little vagrant hedgehog, put it on a plate, and brought it into the morning-room to show it to us ; and thus it had been allowed

to be present during our conversations, and even to crawl about the table among private papers and open letters. These circumstances, as you will see by-and-by, led to important results.

The great question now to be decided was whether Emma and the Doctor could in any way have been mistaken in their impressions, and with this view they were closely cross-questioned.

There were some discrepancies in their descriptions, but none of any great importance. The Doctor assured us, upon the word and honour of (I was going to say a poet, but the word would have been too strong) a professed rhymester, that the Fairy whom he had met on the Mill Hill was riding upon a grey gnat, with a green velvet side-saddle, and a large bumble-bee in sea-green livery attending her; whereas Emma declared that her Fairy was mounted on a black hairy caterpillar; but she also was followed by a bumble-bee in green livery; and Emma particularly observed that he was of a very large size, and had remarkably stout legs; upon which Mr. Heathorn, with an uncomfortable laugh, observed that he had evidently been hired upon figure wages.

We learnt besides, upon further enquiry, that Emma's bumble-bee managed to carry between his legs a minute gold-headed cane, and that the hair of his body, to make it look more cleanly and agreeable, was

plastered with a thick coating of grease and powder. The dress of the Fairy as seen by the Doctor and Emma corresponded exactly, except that Emma observed, which the Doctor did not, that she wore a pair of delicately laced-up boots, and silk stockings of a pale green colour.

These minute details, and the striking agreement in so many particulars, had an effect even upon those most inclined to be incredulous, and Emma's further account of the interview, at length silenced even the sceptical Mr. Heathorn. Emma was standing, as she told us, close by the Weir, looking at the trout, when, to her great surprise, she saw the Fairy on the caterpillar riding down the steep bank. Juno dashed at her; and would, no doubt, have swallowed her whole, but for Emma's interposition, and very peremptory orders to the contrary. The Fairy thanked her warmly, spoke most kindly, and called her 'My dear,' enquired with great politeness after Sir Lloyd and Lady Lloyd, and then begged Emma to do her the favour to take a little note and pencil for her to Lady Lloyd. Emma of course agreed, and the Fairy, unclasping a beautiful little green velvet reticule, tore a minute piece of rose-coloured paper, about the thickness of a cistus leaf, out of a tiny memorandum-book bound in green velvet; and then, telling the caterpillar to stand perfectly quiet, and not wriggle or hump its back, and the bumble-bee to come and let her rest

her paper on his shoulder, she proceeded to write with a gold pencil case, about a quarter of the size of what is called a minikin pin, the note to be given to Lady Lloyd.

When finished, it was folded and twisted and rolled in a most ingenious manner, and was put into an envelope. A minute glass bottle, not larger than an apple pippin, was then produced by the Fairy; both the note and the bottle were formed into one parcel, which Emma was especially charged to deliver safely, and the Fairy then, wishing her good-bye, proceeded at a slow pace along the lower walk of the Mill Hill.

As Emma finished this account, she triumphantly produced the Fairy's parcel—and it need not be said with what exclamations of delight and wonder it was received. To open it was, of course, the difficulty, but Lady Lloyd's delicate fingers proved equal to the task.

The note and the bottle were discovered within, but we were almost afraid to touch them; and how was the note to be read? Mr. Heathorn, still contempetuous, proposed a magnifying-glass, and Mrs. Beaumont suggested an adjournment to the house, where the treasures would be less likely to be blown away by a gust of wind; whilst Miss Rosa very ingeniously reminded Lady Lloyd that, by the help of a needle, it would be easy to undo the note, and

spread it upon a sheet of white paper, when no doubt it would be easily deciphered.

No sooner proposed than done. We immediately went into the house.

To our intense satisfaction, Miss Rosa's idea proved a grand success.

The Fairy Polypragmosyne wrote a very elegant Italian hand, which, by the aid of a magnifying-glass, was perfectly legible; and standing round the table with our eyes riveted on Lady Lloyd, we listened whilst, after hastily glancing through the note to assure herself that it contained no family secrets, she read aloud as follows :—

'My dear Lady Lloyd,—I regret much that I have not been able to make your acquaintance since I came into this country, but both my grasshoppers have lost a shoe, and my new gnat-pony, which my groom persuaded me to buy, is too skittish for me, and nearly threw me off when I met that lame and respectable old gentleman in the walks the other day; so that I have been afraid to venture upon him since, and cannot therefore go far from home. It has been a great satisfaction to me to see your charming little sister at the Weir: she exerted herself so much in my defence, when her dog became alarmed at the sight of my caterpillar, that I must ever feel grateful to her. But I have also wished to express my thanks to yourself, and to your interesting circle,

for the kind attention which you showed last week to a little protégé of mine—a wild little fellow, but full of courage and esprit. His mother, Mrs. Sackville Cavendish Tankerville (she has just taken the name instead of her former one of Hedgehog), is a great friend of mine. Her little urchin—who is, to tell the truth, a spoilt child, insisted on crawling over, and crushing a whole circle of Perceval Arundels (you may have known them formerly under the name of Toadstools), and when his tutor was about to punish him, he ran away, and we should never have found him again, but that some old friends of ours, the good kind Field Mice, who have just taken up their residence on your beautiful bank for the partridge season, met him, after you had been so kind to him, and brought him back. It was from him I heard the substance of your plans for giving enjoyment and happiness to your neighbourhood, and the world in general, and it gives me the greatest pleasure to offer you some little assistance. My dear old uncle, ever to be venerated (he was principal fairy and gold stick in waiting to the Great Mogul, and thus became possessed of a number of valuable secrets), left me in his will a small phial of pillules or globules, called the *Eudæmonistic Pill*; they are quite tiny, and, for this very reason, of such wonderful power. I send a paper of rules as to the manner in which they are to be used, and will only state myself, that, after taking one of them, you

will be able fully to gratify any four wishes which you may have formed for the enjoyment of your friends, and the improvement of the world.'

An exclamation of surprise and delight burst from every member of the party, except Mr. Heathorn, who, always thoughtful and prudent, remarked that 'it was a most singular occurrence. Could we be sure that the pills were not poison?'

'Oh dear, no!' cried Lady Lloyd; 'quite impossible! See what a lady-like hand she writes; and so kind! She begs her best compliments to us all.'

'And how does she sign herself?' asked Mrs. Heathorn, who in this, as in every other matter, seemed to identify herself with her husband's doubts and thoughts, hopes and fears.

'Very affectionately yours,' said Lady Lloyd.

'Indeed!' exclaimed Mr. Heathorn—he was President of a scientific society, and bound therefore to be cautious, before he yielded up his belief—'did you ever see or meet her before?'

'No,' replied Lady Lloyd.

'I do not like those "very affectionates" on a short acquaintance,' said Mr. Heathorn, thoughtfully, 'Whenever I see two ladies kiss each other, after one or two visits, I know it means mischief.'

'Oh! you suspicious, cold-hearted man!' exclaimed all the ladies. 'Do go away! You shall

not have a pill yourself, if you libel us in such a manner.'

Mr. Heathorn shook his head, but it was to no purpose. A strange and overpowering excitement and eagerness had taken possession of us. Our one desire was to lose no time in commencing operations, and we began to recall the beneficient plans which had engrossed our minds, on the eventful day when we were induced to take pity on young Sackville Cavendish Tankerville *né* Hedgehog.

'My dear Mary,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, turning to Lady Lloyd, 'that little inquisitive fellow must have overheard our wishes for the improvement of the town, and putting things right there.'

'Yes,' said Lady Lloyd, 'and Sir Lloyd's desire to get rid of lawyers, and remove the French troops from Rome, and stop the wars in China and America. And you, my dear Cordelia,' she added, turning to Mrs. Beaumont, who was busily knitting a most comfortable kind of black and grey neck-wrap for the poor old Doctor, 'you were so anxious for the diffusion of useful knowledge.'

'Yes,' I added myself; 'we were all suggesting wonderful improvements in the world, and thinking how happy we could make every one if we had the means. But pray—' and I addressed myself to Lady Lloyd—'may we be allowed to read the rules for the proper participation in these wonderful pills?'

Lady Lloyd applied the magnifying-glass to the fairy-paper of directions, and read them aloud.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE EUDÆMONISTIC, OR UNIVERSAL HAPPINESS PILLS.

1. One pill, and one only, each day, must be taken fasting, at half-past six in the morning, in the following manner :—

2. The pill is to be dissolved in four gallons of spring-water, and three table-spoonfuls sipped, in order to make it operate more powerfully. The remainder of the water must be carefully poured away upon green turf.

3. The individual who has thus taken the pill must write down, on a sheet of gilt-edged paper, any four wishes which he or she may have formed for the enjoyment of friends, or the improvement of the world. The writing must be legible, and everything connected with the wish must be specified distinctly.

4. The paper must be folded up, addressed to the Fairy Polypragmosyne, and then placed under the great oak tree, on the bank near the house.

CAUTIONS.

1. No fear need be entertained as to the effects of the pill; for if anything should occur in the course of the day on which it has been taken to induce the participator to unwish all the wishes, or any single wish, everything will immediately return to its original condition; except when the personal appearance, or health, or well-being of any individual may happen to have suffered, in which case a special wish must be added at the moment for restoration and recovery.

2. In case a wish should be unwished, the phial of pills must be passed on to some other hand. It will, therefore, be necessary at once to arrange the order of succession, which must on no account be departed from, and must include every member of the party who has been made acquainted with the power of the pills, unless he or she should decline any share in them.

3. No individual may communicate to another what are the plans which he has formed connected with political affairs, otherwise serious consequences will follow.

4. No fear need be felt as to the effects of the pills on the minds of those benefited by them, or who are a witness of their power. Whilst the pill is in operation, the Fairy will undertake to guard against any inconvenient surprise or astonishment, unless the personal appearance of any individual should be suddenly altered, in which case the change may awaken enquiry as to the cause.

5. The impression that all is natural will last as long as the wish remains in operation, but should the participator retract his wish, the memory of the events will remain, and they will of course excite astonishment in the ignorant and uninstructed.

6. This effect may be guarded against by the wish expressed by the succeeding participator, that the former wish and its consequences should be obliterated, so as to be forgotten by all, except himself and those who share the secret.

'Most simple, most kind!' we all exclaimed, as Lady Lloyd finished reading. It was clear, indeed, that there really need be no fear, and all that was now required was, to arrange the order of succession, and determine who should commence operations, and

take a pill for promoting the happiness of mankind. Neither of these points was very difficult of decision.

Sir Lloyd and Lady Lloyd of course came first, then the members of their family, Mrs. Aberleigh, Mrs. Beaumont, Miss Rosa, and little Emma; for we felt sure that the Fairy would, on no account, like her to be omitted. The Doctor begged to be left to the last, and Mr. Heathorn declined to have any share in the proceedings, Mrs. Heathorn echoing his protests. My turn therefore came after Emma's; and I confess I felt a little disturbed when I thought how remote my chance was of benefiting the world by my wise and most benevolent plans.

Sir Lloyd considered the circumstances with his usual gravity.

'The pills,' he said, 'were no doubt sent to Lady Lloyd, but the duty they involved was so serious that, as the Fairy had left them the choice of order and succession, he could not think it right to entrust them even to her. As to his plans, he would not at the moment decide on too many important points. There were some questions on which he should like to obtain information, and he should therefore read over the reports of the Social Science Association before making certain contemplated changes in the state of the world. Two or three things of minor consequence he had indeed long determined on—and a third—but here he was surprised to find that his voice was

choked. We gathered round him in alarm, but were relieved by Lady Lloyd's quick suggestion—

'Don't be frightened: just remember the cautions. We are not to say beforehand what we intend to do, at least as regards politics. The Fairies must have stopped his mouth. Now, my dear Sir Lloyd, try if you can speak, when you don't intend to tell us any secrets.'

To our great relief, he exclaimed, with his usual distinctness, though with a little irritation—

'Of course I can! but I felt as if some one had stuffed a pocket-handkerchief into my mouth.'

'Certainly,' said Lady Lloyd: 'no wonder. But how delightful to find how great the good Fairy's invisible power is! It must be a warning to you, my dear Sir Lloyd, not to say a word to us about your plans. Go to your room, and keep quiet; I am sure it will be all right. But, dear me! there is the dressing-bell for dinner, and the Llewellyns are coming. Remember'—and she put her hand to her lips, and looked round upon the party admonishingly —'not a word. Silence! Silence!'

And the convocation was dissolved.

CHAPTER II.

SIR LLOYD'S PILL.

I SLEPT only at intervals, interspersed with pleasant dreams, woke up just as the clock was striking half-past six, and after a few minutes, could not forbear ringing my bell for my own man Wyatt, and sending a little note to Sir Lloyd to know if he had taken the pill. And I found that the whole party had done the same, to the no small surprise of the household, and were all ringing their bells. And we had the satisfaction of learning, in reply, that everything had been done properly, and in particular that the medicine was not nauseous, but had only a slight flavour of ipecacuanah, and was otherwise not disagreeable. I proceeded immediately to dress myself, and prepare for the enjoyment of the day; but was disturbed by hearing much brushing and rushing up and down stairs, apparently of ladies' maids, much whispering, and many ejaculations and enquiries of wonder and vexation. 'Have you seen it?' 'Is it in the dressing-room, in the wardrobe?' 'Where can

they be?' 'Mine is gone too! My Lady's is lost! What can be the reason? Some one has carried them off! What shall we do? Have you searched the closets? Have you looked in the attics, in the cellars? Oh dear! Oh dear!' Such were the broken exclamations of dismay and despair that I heard all around me, but of which I could not understand the meaning. The breakfast-bell, however, rang, and I went down to the dining-room as usual. There were no ladies.

'Where is Lady Lloyd?' I asked Gray, the butler.

'My Lady is not coming down to breakfast, sir.'

'Mrs. Beaumont?'

'She is not quite well this morning, sir.'

'Mrs. Aberleigh?'

'She has a headache, sir.'

And poor Gray seemed no less astonished and perplexed than myself.

'Miss Rosa?' I continued.

'Miss Rosa, sir, is having her breakfast with Miss Emma in her own room.'

'Where is Sir Lloyd?' I asked.

'Sir Lloyd, sir, begged his kind regards, but he is so busy this morning, he will not be able to come down to breakfast. He begged, sir, you would excuse him.'

I was sadly bewildered. But the door opened, and in came Mr. Heathorn.

'Good morning!'

'Good morning!'

'I am sorry,' I said, 'to hear the ladies are not well. Is not Mrs. Heathorn coming down to breakfast?'

'No,' said Mr. Heathorn, 'she has ordered breakfast in her own room. To tell the truth, only do not mention it, there is some little difficulty—I scarcely know what—about something——'

As he was speaking, who should come into the room but the old Doctor! Old he looked no longer. Instead of the stick and umbrella with which he usually came limping in, he held in his hand a bunch of sweet peas, which he had just gathered in the garden, where he had been walking for the first time these six months. He seemed quite well, strong and blooming, his hair black instead of grey, his voice firm and clear, his eyes bright, and instead of the feeble fingers with which he used to touch mine in our morning greetings, he gave me such a squeeze of hearty pleasure, that I remembered it for a week.

'Look!' he cried, 'look at me! Here are the first-fruits of those blessed pills. I thought Sir Lloyd would not forget me. I am sure he has wished one good thing at least, that I should be strong and well again. And I, for one, am most exceedingly obliged both to him and the Fairy.'

It was, indeed, a great satisfaction to see the poor old gentleman restored to the use of his limbs. And a still greater satisfaction and delight to feel that the

Fairy's *Eudæmonistic Pill* was not, like so many other medicinal pills, with equally hard names, a hoax and imposture, but a solid and sober reality. Sober, perhaps, I should not say, for the state of exultation and anticipation into which the discovery threw myself at least, did not exactly partake of the character of sobriety.

'But where are the ladies?' asked the Doctor, anxious to exhibit himself to them in his recovered bloom of youth.

Just then I heard a light step and rustling sound in the little hall which led to what I used to call the harem, or ladies' apartments; and going to the door, I caught a faint vanishing appearance of Annette, the lady's maid.

'How is Lady Lloyd?' I asked.

But Annette, with an aspect of much confusion and dismay, and, as I fancied, with an altered appearance generally, which I did not understand, made me an unintelligible answer, and vanished up the harem staircase. Just then I heard a tremendous bump upon the ground—a loud cry—and, looking round, who should I see stretched upon the polished floor of the hall—so slippery that I myself never ventured across it except in a sort of skating process, looking out for any mats on which I might establish myself on my route—but the poor old Doctor! It appeared that in the joy of his recovery, and the indulgence once

more of the free use of his legs, he had ventured on some boyish antics on the polished floor, when down he came. It was only an accident; but, somehow or other, accidents are usually in some mysterious way in the habit of following on follies. We lifted him up, carried him into the breakfast-room, laid him on the sofa, and found that one of his ankles was severely sprained, and a small bone of his arm broken. He was a favourite with the whole party, especially with the ladies—a well-meaning, harmless old man, whom they all took pleasure in making comfortable; and he in return would read to them when they were working, tell them the news of the day, play chess and back-gammon, and make himself generally useful. So that as soon as Mrs. Alsop, the housekeeper, had spread the intelligence of his calamity in the harem apartments, the ladies all came trooping down, forgetting for the moment the reasons which had induced them hitherto to confine themselves to the privacy of their own rooms.

But oh! what a change, what a fall, what a reverse was there in their appearance! Instead of those wonderful convexities, those gigantic bulbs, those silken and muslin hemispheres which used before to greet our eyes, and plague Sir Lloyd—crowding carriages, enveloping the dinner-table in floods of silk and lace, blocking up church pews, frightening us out of our wits, lest some sudden evolution should

wheel them in contact with the fire, and reminding us at every moment of the dome of St. Paul's, scaffolded by a colossal hen-coop; their dresses now fell flat and perpendicular, insipidly rectilinear, their own heads appearing above them like a carved knob acting as handle to an umbrella in its case. All the pomp and grandeur of their spherical superfluities had vanished. They had collapsed like burst balloons. And who and what was the cause? That morning, when they proceeded to put the finishing stroke to their attire, every crinoline in the house had vanished, and (though from causes which I shall hereafter explain, all traces of the fact vanished from the memory of man, and nothing came within my own cognizance that day, beyond the catastrophe within the walls of Brooklyn) I believe that a like phenomenon occurred to a far wider extent throughout Europe, and that we may trace some faint remains of the catastrophe in the subsequent disappearance of crinolines throughout a large portion of the civilised world. I confess myself—and uncle Peter looked round rather severely upon the ladies who were his auditors—that as far as the happiness of mankind is concerned, I am not sure that if a superfluous quantity of silk, satin, and muslin must be trailed about in ladies' dresses, it may not be better to spread it upon a hen-coop, than to use it to sweep the rooms, and brush up in the streets what Nature intended for the scavengers'

carts. But however this may be, he continued, I know with certainty, from my own senses and my own memory (and no philosopher of course will ever allow the testimony of others to enter into competition with this one grand basis of historic truth), that from within the walls of Brooklyn every crinoline had that morning been removed. From Lady Lloyd's to the kitchen maid's, all, by some secret hand, had been swept into the abyss of nothingness—if any such abyss does anywhere exist—or had been enveloped, like Homer's heroes, in a mist impenetrable to human eye and human search.

It would be difficult to describe the feelings of astonishment, dismay, and confusion which at first were excited in every female mind. They were, however, soon checked, on the part of the few individuals acquainted with the secret of the pills, by the recollection of Sir Lloyd's repeated protests against the absurdity and extravagance of the invention, and the reiterated expression of his wish that crinolines could be swept away from the face of the earth. No doubt amongst those less momentous, but most indisputable benefits, which, as possessor of the pills, he purposed to confer upon mankind, this had been one of the most obvious, and had in a moment been accomplished. The salutary change was no doubt inconvenient and slightly exasperating, but all risk of an explosion of irritation on the part of the ladies was happily set aside by the

necessity of attending to the friction of the Doctor's ankle, and making preparations for resetting the broken bone. We took the poor old man upstairs, and laid him on his bed, and though he bore the pain with great patience, he could not help whispering to me as I took my leave to allowhim a chance of sleep, 'Ah! my good friend, perhaps it had been as well for me if dear Sir Lloyd had not been so kind to me. I am not so sure that we know so clearly how to make others happy. Perhaps it might have been better for me to have continued limping about with my stick and umbrella than to have felt so well, and then danced about so foolishly and tumbled.' I had, however, no time to moralise with him, much as I should have liked to enlarge on the frequency with which some sudden burst of good fortune does tempt men to dance about foolishly and to tumble down and break a limb —for just at this moment Mr. Gray, the butler, appeared with an important but disturbed face, to say that Sir Lloyd would be very glad if I could come to him for a few minutes. He had been quite unable to come and see the Doctor himself, he was so overwhelmed with business, but he sent his kind regards and expressions of regret. Somehow or other, I fancied (it may have been only a fancy) that the message would have been warmer at an earlier period of the day; but as Sir Lloyd was, I knew, taking a large view of plans for the happiness of the world, he could not be expected to devote much thought

to such a tiny inconvenience as the fracture of an old friend's bone; and when I entered the business room, I found no difficulty in accounting for a certain degree of refrigeration in Sir Lloyd's domestic interests.

The apartment had been wonderfully enlarged; the table was covered with red despatch boxes, the walls were hung with maps of all parts of the habitable globe. All around were a number of dial-plates belonging to electric telegraphs, connecting the room with every important part of the earth, whilst secretaries were in attendance sending and copying messages.

'My dear friend,' said Sir Lloyd, 'I had not intended to do so much at first, but it is better not to waste time; and I have therefore desired to have at once the control of English and foreign affairs. You know how anxious I have been lately at our own condition, and that of the Continent and America, and indeed, I may add, of India also. Things have been grievously mismanaged. Now, of course, the Premier, as I wished, has resigned, and I shall manage everything my own way, without being hampered by ministers or Parliament. As a beginning, I have ordered the immediate abolition of slavery in America. Whatever ought to be done, should be done without delay.'

Before I could reply, we were interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Bolus, the surgeon, who came to tell

us with great sorrow that the poor Doctor's accident was far more serious than we had supposed: amputation might even be necessary.

'You will, no doubt,' I said, addressing Mr. Bolus, 'perform the operation directly. Whatever ought to be done, and must be done, should be done at once. If the limb is to be got rid of, chop it off—the speediest mode of abolition is the best.'

Mr. Bolus stared with some degree of dismay, and began to explain. 'An operation might finally be necessary, but there must be previous arrangements: the patient must be placed under a course of medicine to guard against inflammation, or collapse from weakness. And it was just possible Nature might right herself without an operation.'

'But,' I said, 'this will take time. It is much simpler and easier to chop the limb off at once. Such,' I added, turning to Sir Lloyd, 'is the course which I suppose you will pursue in America, England, Russia?'

'But,' cried Mr. Bolus, who thought we were talking of the amputation, 'the Doctor may die under a sudden shock.'

I was about to reply, when Sir Lloyd was obliged, suddenly and unceremoniously, to dismiss Mr. Bolus, in consequence of the simultaneous ringing of a number of telegraph bells, bringing messages from the Emperor of Russia, the Sultan, the Hospodar of Wal-

lachia, the Governor of Jamaica, the President of the United States, and also from General Ezekiel Morgan, General Jefferson Washington Morgan, General Obadiah Morgan, and General Ebenezer Morgan, who were all American Generals, but whether Federates or Confederates, we really did not know. Sir Lloyd gave his first attention to them; for they all applied to him as the great central authority for directing the movements of their troops. General Ebenezer Morgan had been previously ordered to march with his cavalry against General Morgan (but which one was not specified). He was to go from New York to Troy, passing as rapidly as he could through Athens, Cairo, Banbury, and Jerusalem. In crossing the river Tomahawkapnacha, close by Richmond, and not far from Hieropolis, some of his troops had been attacked by a pack of wolves, others had been bitten by some poisonous snakes in the swamps at Brentford in Westmoreland, and had suffered in a similar way as they entered Liverpool and Lacedæmon. He wished to know whether he was still to advance. General Obadiah Morgan had also been placed in difficulties, in consequence of a political fracas, and requested Sir Lloyd's advice. Titus Prim had taunted Scipio Africanus with having thick lips, woolly hair, and a black complexion; and as General Jonathan Hogg had arrested Junius Brutus, Decius Mus, and Jedediah Tibbs, besides Themistocles, Socrates, Agricola, and

Peter Stubbs, great confusion had occurred. What course of proceeding would Sir Lloyd recommend?

Before Sir Lloyd could give his attention to this question, he was obliged to listen to fresh messages.

'The Emperor of Russia, sir, begs his compliments. He has, as you wish, emancipated his serfs; but he is wholly unable to follow your advice in hanging the authors of those incendiary fires, since the police are unable to discover them.'

'Order him,' said Sir Lloyd, firmly but quietly—for he was a man of great decision—'to double the police, and put the whole empire under martial law till the incendiaries are discovered.'

'The Sultan, sir, has sold his diamonds, and dismissed his harem, and has given directions for immediately calling a Parliament together in Constantinople by household suffrage.'

'Very good,' said Sir Lloyd; 'but explain to him that the compound householder must have votes, and let him establish a *Times* newspaper, and an *Illustrated News*. No nation can be worth anything without newspapers.'

'Mr. Robinson, the great Eastern traveller, sir, sends word that the Imaum of Muscat has been guilty of great extortion towards the Wahabees. Mr. Robinson thinks it right the English nation should stop such enormities. He thinks also that in that part of the world there is a considerable opening for

Manchester wares and Sheffield goods. A fleet sent thither might compel the natives to be virtuous, and also to buy our goods.'

'Certainly,' said Sir Lloyd, 'all civilised nations should interpose to prevent oppression.' He did not, however, pay as much attention to the second object proposed by Mr. Robinson, as he would have done, had he known how vast a space the sale of Manchester wares and Sheffield goods to savages occupied in the English mind, but only added, 'It is abominable that such atrocities should exist in the nineteenth century.'

What might be the peculiar purity of the nineteenth century which in Sir Lloyd's eyes made it apparently as shocking that wrong should be done in it, as it would be if murder were committed in a sanctuary, or French novels and police reports obtruded on the inmates of a convent, I was unable to see, and I had no opportunity to enquire; for Sir Lloyd followed up his denunciation of the wickedness of the Imaum of Muscat, in sullying the spotless innocence of the nineteenth century, by giving orders with his usual decision. 'Order,' he said 'a battalion of the Guards, the 84th Infantry, and the Lancers, to prepare at once for an expedition to Muscat, and let the Channel Fleet be made ready to attend them. By-the-bye'—and he turned to me—'my dear friend, whereabouts exactly is Muscat? and would you just look in the *Gazette* for

the Wahabees? Is it a town or a country? We must see what course is to be taken in case it should be necessary for the fleet to bombard the capital.'

But while Sir Lloyd was examining the map, or rather maps—for I observed that he turned alternately to a map of Asia and of Africa, as if he was not quite certain of his geography (and Cabinet councillors when directing generals how to carry on a war, have probably often done the same)—another violent ringing of bells commenced; for the good Fairy's people had employed the electric telegraph to bring every part of the earth into connection with the central government; and never before have been realised with such perfection that grand dream of centralisation and unity, for which so many emperors have sighed, so many nationalities rebelled, so many nations been plunged into misery, and so many Popes into what we may hope is only their own purgatory.

Whilst the clerks were taking down the messages, Sir Lloyd briefly informed me of some of the comprehensive plans for the reformation of the world; which he had already begun to carry out.

'You see,' he said, 'that the wonderful and real power which the excellent Fairy has given me must not be neglected. Life is very short; and were anything to happen to me, I should be responsible if I had failed to seize such an opportunity for carrying out the beneficial measures I have so often pondered

over, and correcting the terrible evils we all deplore. One thing you will be glad to hear—I have ordered, without a moment's delay, that peace shall be proclaimed in America. They are all to kiss and shake hands; and so, happily, that grievous spectacle will be at an end.'

Even whilst Sir Lloyd was speaking, the telegram from America arrived.

'The Presidents have proclaimed peace. The armies have all kissed and shaken hands on the field of battle. General Ezekiel Morgan kissed General Jefferson Washington Morgan with great fervency on both cheeks, amidst loud applause; and General Obadiah Morgan shook hands so cordially with ten of the enemy that he dislocated his own wrist. The bands struck up the grand national anthem of "Yankee Doodle." The troops marched back to their former position. Peace was again proclaimed, and the battle recommenced with the utmost ferocity. The Northerners have gained a complete victory. General Ebenezer Morgan has crowned himself with immortal glory by a grand strategical movement, which has placed him thirty miles in advance of the pursuing and routed Federals. Confederate Cavalry, under General Morgan, have taken 20,000 prisoners, and are totally defeated. The war may now be considered as finished. The Federals have established their freedom. The Confederates are triumphant. The star-spangled ban-

ner once more soars up into the empyrean, to glut its glorious and immortal beak with the clouds of fame, and pour a cataract of Niagaras upon the dastardly serf-ridden kingdoms of decrepit Europe.'

Sir Lloyd seemed rather bewildered with this intelligence, and said something indistinctly about the uncertainty of telegrams. But without endeavouring to understand the news just received, he proceeded to explain, or rather indicate, his views respecting the King of Dahomey. I said indicate, and not explain; for the necessity of decision on new questions occurred with such rapidity every moment, that no kind of discussion was possible. But as Sir Lloyd, like a true Englishman, had been in the regular habit of reading the *Times* every morning, and the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* every three months, he understood every political question, and was able to pronounce on the merits of men and measures embracing the interests of the whole globe.

'I perceive,' he said, 'by the *Times* this morning, which I have just glanced at, that there is likely to be another horrible sacrifice. Of course I shall not allow it. And with regard to the Abyssinians——'

The telegraph bells rang again.

There was a message from the Emperor of China, complaining of the wickedness of the Taepings;—from the neighbourhood of the Salt Lake, denouncing the profligacy of the Mormons;—from New Zealand, an

nouncing a fresh outbreak of the Maoris;—and from Japan, requesting leave that the English might bombard and burn some town, as the most effectual mode of inducing the Japanese to purchase their clothes at Messrs. Silkem's newly-established shop. The last message attracted the largest share of Sir Lloyd's interest—probably because the subject was the one on which he had thought the most.

'Japan!' he exclaimed. 'Of course. However unfortunate the necessity, this must be done, or the natives will not trade. What right can a nation of savages possess to shut itself out from the blessings of civilisation, and refuse to hold communication with such a glorious and beneficent empire as our own? If the Japanese, who now pay sixpence halfpenny a yard for the inferior stuff manufactured in their own country, can obtain from us a better article for fourpence three farthings, surely we are bound to insist that they shall not waste their money. I fear,' he added, 'that they are but children, and we shall be compelled to treat them as such. That idea of shutting themselves out from the world—as if English soldiers or sailors could ever demoralise a single creature—is an absurdity. Are not all Englishmen free? are we not all Christians? Have we not a House of Commons and Magna Charta, free trade, and the *Times* newspaper? Is not England the one refuge for all persons who are forced to flee from other

countries? How can such a nation do harm by intercourse with Eastern savages? No; we must be firm. It is for the interest of the Japanese themselves that they should support our commerce, and buy our pocket-handkerchiefs. If they refuse and rebel, we must put the rebellion down. We have our iron-clads, and they have not.'

'Should you think,' I asked, 'of annexing Japan?'

'No,' he replied thoughtfully, 'not at once, not to-day, though it may be necessary to-morrow. When a civilised nation comes in contact with one that is uncivilised, experience shows us that conquest and annexation—and perhaps in some cases the annihilation of the savage—is the necessary end. But the Japanese,' he continued, 'are a favourite race of mine. They seem to possess considerable ingenuity, and great simplicity of manners. I have no doubt they are a very innocent race; but I shall order one improvement—they must have dressing-rooms attached to their baths. It is refreshing to think of such general ablutions in such a warm climate, it almost reminds one of an Englishman and his tub;—still——.'

But here Sir Lloyd was stopped by some question from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Ireland, as every one knows, requires the utmost nicety of management; and Sir Lloyd, who felt that, as an Englishman, he knew thoroughly how its evils were to be

remedied, had determined at once to make the country peaceable, loyal, rich and happy, by draining the bogs, and giving the peasantry lectures on political econony; and had issued special orders that the smallest question relating to Ireland, should be reserved exclusively for his own decision. The Lord Lieutenant's despatch contained the police reports of two assassinations of landlords, which Sir Lloyd resolved should immediately be punished by putting the whole district under martial law; and it proceeded to give an account of the Fenian movements, and of a proclamation by which Queen Victoria was declared to be dethroned, and the whole power of the kingdom vested in generals Patrick O'Neil, late linendraper's assistant; Murphy O'Shane, major-general, and late pot-boy at the gin-shop, No. 14 Shane Street; and Daniel O'Raffarty, ambassador extraordinary from the United States, and late shoe-black in Trinity College, Dublin. What was to be done in consequence of this alarming proclamation, was of course left to Sir Lloyd's judgment. But, according to the ordinary practice in Ireland, where it is thought necessary to refer everything to the Government, Sir Lloyd was also informed that Mrs. O'Dowd, of O'Dowd Castle, county Galway, had fallen down and broken her thumb, and had written to the Castle to know what she should do with it. Sir Lloyd, with his usual active and untiring benevolence, sent for

Buchan's medicine to search for a prescription, and I took the opportunity of leaving the room. I had, indeed, wished to obtain a hearing upon an insignificant matter—Widow Wilkins's vicious cow—which had broken down one of the meadow fences, and had, in consequence, been put in pound. I was hoping to intercede for the poor woman, and relieve her from her distress; but I saw that it would be impossible to gain Sir Lloyd's attention for any object so near home. His mind was so entirely occupied with the Taepings, the King of Dahomey, the Fenians, the Confederates, and Mr. O'Dowd, who had all the good fortune to be removed to that distance which seems necessary in order to bring into a focus, and warm and kindle the rays of cosmopolitan benevolence, that I could not expect him to think about Widow Wilkins.

CHAPTER III.

SIR LLOYD'S LAST WISH.

I TOOK my hat and stick, and proceeded by the lower walk under the terrace, intending to stroll down to Rayadil, and consult with Mr. Pritchard, Sir Lloyd's agent. As I passed the great stag-headed old oak on the bank—the same under which the Fairy had enjoined us to deposit our orders for the day—I heard a most prodigious chirping, chattering, and gossiping over my head, which I recognised at once as Fairy language; and looking up, I saw the old gnarled shattered skeleton of the gigantic tree, covered with what, at a distance, I should have taken for a flock of starlings. But on coming nearer, I recognised them at once as the Fairy's people, evidently employed by her to assist in the execution of Sir Lloyd's plans. They were all dressed in green jackets and pantaloons, with a strip of gold lace. Some of them, I observed, had black portfolios, with the Fairy's monogram; others, red morocco despatch boxes slung under their arms, and others—apparently an inferior class—were attired in

that becoming uniform of blue swallow-tailed coats and red collars, which the taste of England has selected for the official dress of the London postman, and the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. I could not stop, however, to investigate more closely the varieties of Fairy attire, but proceeded down the high road on my way to the town. As I approached the narrow, single-arched stone bridge, which crosses the Lug just above the new Weir, I was surprised to see a crowd of people, apparently with some confusion and anxiety, searching the river, under the thick-grown alders on both sides.

'What is the matter?' I asked of one of the labourers. 'What are they doing?'

'Oh, sir! such a dreadful thing has happened! They are looking for Lawyer Pritchard—dragging the river. They say he has drowned himself.'

'Dragging the river!' I exclaimed. 'Drowned himself! Impossible! I was just coming down to consult him.'

'Yes, sir; nobody knows where he is. But he disappeared this morning; and they say there's a lot of money gone too.'

And, in fact, under the natural operation of village, or town, or city gossip, with the disappearance of poor Mr. Pritchard's body, there had been a simultaneous disappearance of his character. I became really alarmed. For Mr. Pritchard, who had always been

reputed a most upright, honourable man, was Sir Lloyd's trusted agent. And, alas! there have been recently too many proofs that trusted agents are not always trustworthy.

'When and how did he disappear?' I asked.

'Oh, sir! he was dressing this morning about half-past six o'clock, and had just begun to shave himself, and Mrs. Pritchard looked through the curtains to tell him to mind and not cut himself, and he was gone, sir! And the door, sir, was locked inside, and the windows were bolted, and the chimney-board was up; so that he could not have got out.'

'Very extraordinary!' I said. 'Very strange! Was any note left? Are there any traces of him?' And, as usual, my suspicions lighted on poor innocent Mrs. Pritchard. 'What sort of person,' I asked, 'is Mrs. Pritchard?' But I was interrupted by a rider on a bay horse, who came galloping furiously down the hill, from a town within four miles of Rayadil. The horse was dropping sweat, and the rider evidently in great anxiety. 'Have you found him?' he cried to the crowd.

'No,' said one. 'No,' said the other.

'Found whom?' I asked of the horseman.

'Lawyer Sharpham,' he said, 'of Drayton.' 'He's disappeared, nobody knows where.'

'Lawyer Sharpham,' I replied, 'of Drayton! But they are searching here for Lawyer Pritchard of Rayadil.'

'Yes, sir, and Lawyer Sharpham is gone, and we

suspect to America, if he has not drowned himself; and the bank has stopped payment, and half the town is ruined.'

'Gone!' I said. 'But when was he seen last?'

'Oh, sir! this morning about half-past six o'clock, Lawyer Sharpham was in bed, and Mrs. Sharpham was telling him it was time to get up; and he had just told her to hold her tongue, and bade her get him a beef-steak pudding for dinner, which he was always fond of, with kidneys and onions; and then Mrs. Sharpham turned round to tell him he could not have it, and he wasn't there, sir. And he had not got out of bed, for the clothes were not disturbed, and the curtains were closed, and the door locked. And there is a hue-and-cry after him, and the police cannot find anything about it.'

'Most strange, indeed!' was all I could say.

But my amazement was not diminished by the appearance of the Minster coach at the turning of the road. It was crowded with outside passengers, who were evidently talking of some new and portentous event. Their faces were full of importance—for the knowledge of a great calamity, or what men believe to be a great calamity, always affects them in this manner—always makes them imagine themselves to be great also, and people of consequence. The fat red-faced coachman reined up his horses as he came to the bridge; and all the passengers, with one voice, cried out once more—

'Have you found 'em? Have you found 'em?'

'No,' was the reply from the crowd. 'He is not here.'

'Which of 'em are you dragging for?' said the coachman.

'Lawyer Pritchard,' said the policeman.

'Lawyer Pritchard!' cried the guard. 'Why, is he gone too? We was asking for Lawyer Roe, and Lawyer Doe, and the two other lawyers—partners—I forget their names, at Stepton Bishop. They have all mizzled.'

'Skedaddled, you mean,' said an American traveller on the coach, who was anxious to reform and improve the corrupt English speech and pronunciation, by the more correct and elegant dialect of Western refinement.

'I don't know what that means,' said the guard; 'but they are all gone, and no one knows where. And here's a handbill, and a 100*l.* reward for finding them.'

I was about to ask for further information, but the horses now became restive from the crowd, the bridge was narrow, the parapet low, the river deep, and the coachman thought it more advisable to gather up his reins, and drive on.

'Most strange!' I repeated to myself. 'Most extraordinary!' And then, for the first time, flashed upon me the remembrance of Sir Lloyd's aversion to lawyers, whom, like many other persons,

he believed to be merely employed as ministers of mischief to mankind, and whom I had often heard him threaten to exterminate from any country over which he had the control. It was impossible to avoid the misgiving thought—was he, Sir Lloyd, in any way instrumental in this sudden realisation of his oft-repeated wish—this sudden disappearance of the lawyers? I thought it prudent to take the Superintendent of Police aside, and suggest that, as Sir Lloyd was a magistrate, it would be well to come up and consult with him.

We found him still busily occupied in dictating despatches; one to the King of Denmark, expressing his intense disgust at the impertinence of some late messages from the British Government, and offering every apology which an Englishman would wish to have made for them; another to Cardinal Antonelli, abolishing at once the secular power of the Popedom; and a third to the Emperor of Morocco, requiring him without delay to study Adam Smith and Mr. Malthus. Our own business was, however, so urgent, that I entreated him to come with me into the library, and begging the Superintendent of Police to remain in the ante-room, I informed him of the sudden disappearance of the lawyers.

There was sufficient change in his countenance to show that he was not wholly ignorant of the fact, though he had been so occupied with the affairs of

Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, that the petty interests of some country attorneys had almost escaped his memory.

'May I ask a question,' I ventured to say; 'it is really not from idle curiosity; but knowing your strong aversion to lawyers, and your conviction that the world would be much better without them (I can well understand the feeling, since that bill of costs in your last Chancery suit), would you just tell me confidentially whether the removal of them from the neighbourhood, formed any part of your wishes this morning?'

'Why, yes, my dear friend,' he replied; 'yes—you are right. The necessity was so obvious, there was no occasion to delay. And the assizes will be held in a few days, and nothing will so effectually prevent mischief then as the suppression of the whole race. Of course I do not mean the judges and barristers, but the attorneys, whose lives are spent in dragging people into hot water and law-suits, and then fleecing them with their six-and-eightpences.'

'But, my dear Sir Lloyd,' I replied, 'may I ask where you wished them to be? Not at the bottom of the Red Sea, I trust; for by this time they must have been drowned, and the case would present a most serious aspect when brought before a jury.'

'No,' said Sir Lloyd, 'I certainly did not wish them there.'

'Did you,' I asked, 'wish to have them sent to Coventry? We can, in that case, telegraph to them at once to return, and it is very important they should. I can scarcely imagine what the consequence would be if the facts were known.'

'I don't think I wished them sent to Coventry,' replied Sir Lloyd, thoughtfully; 'but I really forget at this moment where it was. It seemed of very little consequence, so that we were rid of them.'

'But just try to remember,' I urged. 'Was it Jericho? There might be a risk of their being pillaged and murdered by the Arabs; still, we might send out for them, and we might perhaps pacify the populace, and make some liberal compensation to the families.'

'No,' said Sir Lloyd, 'when I reflect, I am sure I could not have said Jericho. It is a vulgar expression, and I could not have used it. But I have had so many things to think of. Oh! now I remember. Yes —I am sure I did say—I wished them at Nova Zembla.'

'My dear Sir Lloyd!' I could not help exclaiming, 'what a frightful idea! They will be frozen to death.'

'Dear me!' said Sir Lloyd, 'I never thought of that. It was only my way of expressing that I wished they were out of the country.'

'But the Fairy takes everything literally,' I replied:

'and two of the lawyers were, as I happen to know, at the time of their removal, in a most unprepared condition for a sudden transportation to the North Pole—one was in his shirt-sleeves, the other in his night-dress. Unless they have fallen in with some Esquimaux, they must have perished by this time. What can we do?'

I was horror-struck at the act, and at its inevitable consequences, and my dismay was not diminished by hearing a knock at the door (knocks at the door are singularly unpleasant sounds in certain states of feeling), and a servant announce Colonel Wildman, a neighbouring magistrate.

'I felt it better,' he said, 'to come, Sir Lloyd, and consult with you, as chairman of the Quarter Sessions, about this extraordinary disappearance.'

I thought Sir Lloyd would have been confused, but, to my surprise (and, I must say, rather to my consternation), he took the question quite calmly, and without appearing to have the slightest fear of the effect his answer might produce on Colonel Wildman, he replied—

'Oh! I will explain it in a moment. It is my doing. I am sure you will rejoice with me to be rid of those rogues, you have suffered so much from them yourself. The fact is, I took a little pill this morning, and that has given me an opportunity of sending them off to Nova Zembla, where we have so often wished them to be.'

'What did you say? A little pill!' exclaimed Colonel Wildman, with some astonishment, but not as great as I had anticipated.

Sir Lloyd was compelled to enter into more details, during which the Colonel's face grew longer and longer; and yet I remarked that, even under these singular circumstances, the Fairy's promise held true. The Colonel accepted the possibility of all that had happened without any overwhelming surprise. That which seemed mostly to weigh upon him was, however, not so much the fate of the lawyers and the consequences to Sir Lloyd, as the effect of such an association with the Fairy upon the public mind. He went to one of the bookcases, took down a volume of the statutes at large, and first ran through a number of cases under the heads of abduction, kidnapping, forcible transportation, manslaughter, and murder, and then anxiously searched for some old unrepealed statutes touching witchcraft and sorcery. The end was that he turned to us with a very serious countenance, and assured us that the gravest consequences must follow if the fact were known.

'Burning alive,' he said, 'was, happily, not now in force, but——'

I hastily interrupted him, for I caught the expression of horror in Sir Lloyd's face.

'There is no fear!' I exclaimed. 'In the nineteenth century every one knows, from his own inner conscious-

ness that there can be no such things as witches, fairies, or indeed spiritual beings of any kind. This world, now that we have steam printing-presses, and enlightened education without a creed, under the Privy Council, is wholly free from superstition. Even if Sir Lloyd were to be brought to trial and hundreds of witnesses were to prove that he had had the pills, and that Mr. Pritchard and his friends had been sent to Nova Zembla, there could be no conviction. The inner consciousness of the judge and jury would be quite sufficient to prove that the charge was fabulous.'

'Yes,' said Colonel Wildman. 'But the populace are likely to think differently. They may not believe in fairies, but they do believe in spirits. If a strong feeling were aroused, and meetings held, and threats used, the Government would be compelled to yield. They would necessarily think it better even to burn Sir Lloyd for witchcraft, than to hazard a collision which must end by calling out troops, and shooting rioters, and dissolving the Ministry.'

'I need not,' continued uncle Peter, 'weary you with the scene and the discussion which followed. Colonel Wildman was a magistrate of much experience, and his authority in legal questions stood very high. The few arguments which Sir Lloyd used in his own defence went to prove that the promotion of happiness was the essence of all virtue; and that the removal of pettifogging lawyers from a neighbourhood

must be a benefit to society, and therefore, whoever effected it, must do good and was good.

Colonel Wildman, in reply, reminded him that the English law, like a strange sort of antediluvian breccia, or pudding-stone—coagulated from stalactites and stalagmites, pebbles, bones, and clay, and fragments from the stone, bronze, and iron ages—was formed in times of darkness, when men fancied that there was a standard of right and wrong, very different from that grand one of the nineteenth century, which declared that virtue was benevolence and philanthropy. 'And the Legislature,' he said, 'still remained somewhat in darkness upon this point. It had not yet attained that blissful state of confidence which enabled them to repose upon the enlightened benevolence of individuals for the security of society. Laws had been laid down in former days, and there were persons who even fancied that there were some which were binding upon the Legislature itself by an authority above them. At all events, these old-fashioned, unenlightened laws were, unfortunately, still in force, and all persons were required to obey them. Good might accrue to the world from the removal of the lawyers by Sir Lloyd, yet to Sir Lloyd himself there would undoubtedly accrue, if not hanging or burning alive, yet certainly imprisonment, or convict labour, or something which would be eminently disagreeable. What is to be done?' added Colonel Wildman. 'Have you no

means of bringing the lawyers back? Can you not take another pill?'

Here I ventured to interpose, and informed him that certainly to-morrow morning Sir Lloyd could take another pill, and bring the lawyers home; but four-and-twenty hours in Nova Zembla for men in their condition would be very trying; and I much doubted if, even when they were brought back, they would be alive. I then took Sir Lloyd aside, and reminded him that he had only to unwish what he had wished, and doubtless the attorneys would be restored to their afflicted friends.

It was clear to me that Sir Lloyd's own mind was strongly inclined in this direction, but that he could not resolve to abandon to others that wonderful power of producing happiness, the effects of which he had so strikingly realised.

'What,' said he, 'is to become of America? What will the Channel Fleet do without orders? What will the Emperor of China say? How is Morocco to be civilised? How are the Turks to be reformed? The Pope has just set out for Jerusalem. And if I throw up the reins of government, the whole of Europe will be plunged in confusion, and there will be no hope of its ever attaining happiness.'

'My dear Sir Lloyd,' I said, 'I feel much for the Emperor of China, and the Emperor of Morocco, and indeed for the world generally; but—I frankly confess

a weakness—the certainty of your removal at least to the treadmill, balances in my mind the uncertainty of the removal of the sad evils under which Morocco and the world are labouring. You might possibly even be hung. Think what Lady Lloyd would feel. Or only imagine yourself brought up before the magistrates; the people at Rayadil thronging to see you—hooting at you—Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Sharpham, and the others appearing in court with their children, in deep mourning and hysterics. Think of the prison dress, the food—imagine yourself a convict. I entreat you leave the world to take care of itself. Lady Lloyd will take a pill to-morrow, and doubtless will desire to carry out many of your benevolent political plans. Only wish at once that the poor lawyers may be brought back to their afflicted families, and I feel confident that all will be right.'

But why should I repeat the logical and eloquent rhetoric with which I enforced my arguments? I saw by a change in Sir Lloyd's countenance that my object was gained, that the wish had been unwished, and that the efficacy of the pill was at an end; and, as the proof of my success, in one moment another sudden metamorphosis was wrought in the business room.

Fortunately, Colonel Wildman had already retired at my request, and with my earnest entreaties for secrecy during the next twenty-four hours; otherwise, I know not what effect would have been produced on

his mind by the extraordinary change in the aspect of the house. The business room, as I said, relapsed into its usual unornamented state, with the maps of Shropshire and Merionethshire on one side, and engravings of Lord Eldon, Mr. Pitt, the Duke of Wellington, and Sir Robert Peel, surrounding a plan of the estate on the other. The electric telegraph vanished, the secretaries melted into thin air, the cloud of starlings, as I imagined them to be, vanished with their green liveries and red despatch boxes from the branches of the old oak, and a most delightful calm and silence seemed to fall upon the whole house. Sir Lloyd was, of course, a little downcast; but he could not help observing—

'I do hope one thing, that my letter to the king of Denmark went. I do feel that Englishmen owe an apology for such meddling, officious, impertinent interference with States smaller than ourselves.'

'Yes,' I said, 'there can be no harm in that.'

But at this moment luncheon was announced; and we all met in the dining-room with an uncomfortable feeling of disappointment and anxiety. To our surprise, the poor old Doctor appeared as usual with his stick and umbrella. He told us that his ankles were quite well, and his bone he found unbroken. The fact that the wish had been unwished, had been enough to replace everything as it originally stood. Whether such was to be always the case, we did not

then know; but the experience certainly emboldened us to indulge again in the pills; for if merely unwishing a wish removed all the perils and mischief of the wish, or if repentance set everything right again without any more trouble, why there could be nothing to fear in any error or mistake we might make. This, of course, was very comforting, and we all remarked, drawing our breath, as relieved from some anxiety, that though we were very sorry to see the poor Doctor again with his umbrella, and general prostration of strength, still perhaps this was better than the sprained ankle and broken bone, and was a proof that we might indulge in some more pills with perfect impunity. It was, however, requisite not only that when we made a mistake, as Sir Lloyd had done, things should be restored to their original state, by unwishing the wish, but also that every trace of the mistake should be erased from the memory of man. For if the servants, the police, and the Government, the newspapers, and our intimate friends and acquaintances, whose great delight it is to twit us with our follies, remembered what we had done, it would be nearly as bad as if things were not set right at all. We resolved, therefore, that Lady Lloyd should take a pill the next morning, and make it her first wish that every trace of the day's proceedings should be erased from all memories but our own. I then proposed to Sir Lloyd—though I fear his mind was still occupied

with the deplorable state of Abyssinia and Morocco —that we should walk up to see poor Biddy Wilkins, and examine into the state of the fence which the unruly cow had broken down—that foolish, mischievous, irrational animal, which would not be content with feeding quietly in its own meadow, but would break through Sir Lloyd's hedges, and trespass on forbidden ground, doubtless with the idea of augmenting the mass of happiness in the world of cows, by opening access for itself and its sisters to a luxurious field of red clover.

Sir Lloyd, once led into a train of benevolent thought nearer home, though on a smaller scale, added, that he would take the opportunity of looking at Giles Scroggins's cottage, which required a new chimney, and also enquire after Farmer Flail's rheumatism, and give some orders to the bailiff about the food of some sheep which were to be sent to the Agricultural Show, besides saying a word to Mr. Bury, the clergyman, about old Widow Hopkins's allowance from the parish: and then he thought he should come round by the meadows, so that he might decide where Lady Lloyd's new school was to be built. Very tiny contemptible things these, compared with the stoppage of the war in America, and the reform of the Taepings in China, but still not to be despised; and we were accordingly thinking of taking our hats to pursue our walk, and endeavour

to promote the happiness of the world in a less grand and less illicit way than we had contemplated in the morning, when Gray, the butler, announced that Mr. Sharp, the superintendent of the police, had come up to see Sir Lloyd, and that Mr. Pritchard had been found.

'Found!' we all exclaimed.

'When? where?' asked Lady Lloyd.

'In his bedroom, my Lady.'

'Send the policeman here,' said Sir Lloyd. And the erect, well-drilled, and intelligent blue man made his appearance; and after he had drank a glass of wine to my Lady's good health, he proceeded to inform us that while he was up at Brooklyn before, and just at the moment when I knew that Sir Lloyd had wished all the lawyers safe back in their homes, Mr. Pritchard's housemaid, who was holding the salts to poor Mrs. Pritchard's nose, and consoling her by the assurance that it could not be helped, and that all men were mortal, and that she had better not cry, because it would make her head ache, had heard the bell of Mr. Pritchard's bedroom ring, and took it of course for Mr. Pritchard's ghost; that upon this Mrs. Pritchard had fainted clean away; and the whole establishment having been summoned, together with the policeman; and armed with a variety of weapons, they marched up the stairs. The policeman in the van opened the door with trepidation, and was struck aghast by

seeing Mr. Pritchard himself, but in such a condition that the housemaid and cook turned their backs and fled, screeching, into the kitchen, where they bolted themselves in safe, and fell into two chairs and hysterics. Mr. Pritchard was enveloped in a rough filthy sealskin wrapper; his head was thatched, as it were, with snow, a long icicle hung down from his chin, and another from his nose; all that they could see of his face was blue with frost, and several of his fingers and toes were frost-bitten; and he was trying to rub them with some snow, which he had gathered from between the collar of his shirt and his neck. He had a large piece of whale-blubber in his hand, and his mouth was greased with some train-oil, which he had been drinking; and his whole appearance was so shocking, that even Englishmen who delight to see prize fighters fight a battle, and men hung at Newgate, would have shrunk from looking at it.

All the account which he could give of himself, after repeated enquiries why he went away, was the following: that, while he was shaving himself that morning, in his bedroom, before his glass, with the razor in his hand, and the soapsuds on his face, he found himself suddenly seated on a heap of snow and ice, with nothing but snow and ice around, and before him the shore of a black dismal sea, covered with icebergs, round which were seals playing, and whales, and white bears; that he cried out for help and Mrs. Pritchard,

and, fortunately, was overheard by some Esquimaux, who were living in huts close by, with the usual accompaniment of reindeer, dogs, sledges, fish, entrails, and a mass of abomination and filth, which would have done honour even to the river Thames, or a back alley in the heart of London. The savages took compassion on him, were charmed with the novelty of his attire, and also with the flavour of the soapsuds, and carried him into a hut, where they wished him to stay, and marry one of their squaws. But, faithful to his engagement with Mrs. Pritchard, and unwilling to risk a prosecution in Nova Zembla for bigamy, he steadily refused, when they turned him out of the hut, and all at once he found himself back in his bedroom, and rang the bell.

There could, of course, be but one opinion as to the state of his mind. Anyone who insists on having experienced or seen facts which we never experienced ourselves, must be either a liar or mad. That Mr. Pritchard was not a liar, seemed evident by the snow on his head, the icicles on his nose, the blubber, the train-oil, and the sealskin, which were all strong indications of a real trip to the North Pole; but inasmuch as the logical German theory of the nineteenth century allows but of two solutions to the problem of a narrative of facts such as we never witnessed ourselves, and as it was necessary to reject one of them—namely, the hypothesis of

a deliberate lie—it was equally necessary to recur to the other, namely, the belief that Mr. Pritchard was an enthusiast and a madman; well-intentioned, no doubt, and innocent, and without any possible reason for an enthusiasm which had frost-bitten his toes; but still an enthusiast and mad. And accordingly Mr. Parkins, the mad doctor, was sent for, who of course recognised clear signs of madness in the icicles, and the snow, and the whale-blubber; and when he had melted the first from Mr. Pritchard's nose and chin, and sent the last to a chemist to be analysed and placed in the Museum, he administered hot brandy and water, put his patient to bed, and departed, ruminating on the singular forms in which delusion manifests itself among men.

Sir Lloyd and I looked at each other as the superintendent closed his account.

A very unpleasant idea suggested itself. We had forgotten the caution given in the rules, and Sir Lloyd had omitted especially to wish that the effect of the pills, as personally affecting individuals, should be at an end. For this we must wait till the next day. We could only congratulate ourselves that this omission could then be rectified, and trust that, until it was, no suspicion would be awakened, as regarded our share in the sufferings of the lawyers. The policeman having drank another glass of wine to the Queen's health, bowed himself out of the room, and

we were left to pursue our walk. Sir Lloyd, though somewhat abashed and dispirited, as the Emperor of Russia might be, if suddenly dethroned and left in private life, had so much good sense and kindness of heart, that he soon took a hearty interest in the insignificant but benevolent objects he had proposed to himself, though he entered into them with more of self-distrust than when he was diffusing happiness over the four quarters of the globe. Nor did I ever hear that from the kind and liberal little acts and words which I witnessed in the course of our progress, any harm whatever happened to Biddy Wilkins, or Farmer Flail, or Giles Scroggins. On the contrary, I have seen several of them since, and they have reminded me themselves of that morning, and the comfort which Sir Lloyd's visit had been to them.

You may well suppose that, after the excitement of the day, we were all glad to spend a quiet evening; and, whatever our thoughts might be, we carefully abstained from making any allusion to the pills, fearing lest an invisible pocket-handkerchief might be stuffed into our mouths. A shade of vexation did, indeed, at times pass over Sir Lloyd's face, but he exerted himself to be cheerful; I, myself, also could not help feeling some anxiety as to the troubles in which we might be involved the next day, by Lady Lloyd's thirst for our happiness. But she, herself, remained serene and calm, occupied in making some little

sketches of a building, and looking at a map of Canada—a country in which she had spent her youth, and where two of her favourite brothers were still living. As she referred at times to her memorandum book, with a satisfied face, it was evident that she had no fear of her own power of promoting the enjoyment of mankind, no intention of devolving the pills on any other of the party. Our fate was in her hands, and with this conviction, and with a little envy, and no little wish that one pill at least might come down to each of us, we lighted our candles, shook hands, wished each other good-night, and retired to our rooms.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY LLOYD'S PILL.

I CONFESS I found, on my own part, some difficulty in composing myself to sleep. Fortunately, I had in my youth been intimately acquainted with a Secretary of State for the Colonies, and another for Foreign Affairs, both of them newly come into office, and both of them filled with zeal for promoting the happiness of mankind, especially by advising, overruling, writing letters, and multiplying despatches. From the one I had been imbued with some idea of centralisation, and of imperial government from a distance. In the other I had witnessed the delight of meddling with other people's affairs, lecturing them on their duties, and prescribing for their improvement. I felt, therefore, less astonishment than many others might have felt, at the extent to which my excellent friend, Sir Lloyd, had developed his benevolent projects. And yet again, when I came to reflect, I trembled at what might await any one of us from the possible possessors of the pills. It was useless to dwell for comfort on

the good nature of Lady Lloyd, the good sense of Mrs. Aberleigh, of the fine taste and æstheticism of Miss Rosa, the childlike innocence of little Emma. It is evident, from the critical researches of modern history, that the most amiable characters, once deeply imbued with their own ideas of good and evil, and resolved to carry them out, when opportunity may occur, are capable of adopting plans which, applied to ourselves, would be highly unsatisfactory. Henry VIII., we now know, was led by conjugal affection alone, and by zeal for the welfare of his crown, to behead his wives. It was Nero's longing to embellish Rome which induced him to set fire to the city. The best intentions are no security against the worst measures. And there was no escape from the present danger. Neither distance, nor retirement, nor ignorance of my address —supposing I should leave Brooklyn—would save me from the benevolent persecution of the friends in whose hearts I knew I occupied a considerable place. I could but remain where I was, bear whatever I might be called on to suffer, in the way of enjoyment, and indemnify myself by really making people happy when the pills should come—as I did not doubt they would—to my own lot.

One other point made me anxious, namely, the effect of the day's proceedings upon the public mind. I could but trust that the Lethe wish, as I called it, would succeed in cancelling every trace of the

occurrences. The first moment, therefore, that it was possible in the morning, I sent a note to Lady Lloyd, to enquire if all had been done in order, and then ordered Wyatt, my own man, to bring me my papers and letters, directly the early post arrived. I opened the *Times*, not without considerable trepidation, but was rejoiced to find that not the faintest trace appeared of any commotion in the political world. All was to-day as it had been before a pill had been taken. The Three per Cents remained at 95. The Foreign Secretary was still writing provoking despatches, and concocting laws which were never to be enforced, and threatening penalties never to be exacted. The Prime Minister was tranquil at his country seat. The Queen had walked undisturbed on the slopes at Windsor. Mr. Reuter had received no important telegrams, and Parliament remained prorogued till February 14. I glanced at the leading article, looked for a second edition, but there was not a word of Abyssinia, or Morocco, of the Emperor of Russia, or the Congress of America. Nor was there the slightest symptom of that prudent caution which, in a newspaper, usually indicates the knowledge or suspicion of some great change; when the writer's mind seems to flutter like a sail in preparation for a tack, and says just so much for one party, and so much against it—so much for one set of principles, and so much for another, that the

leader of public opinion may be able to steer whichever way the wind may blow, and yet still claim credit for correctness of prophecy, and for conducting others, rather than following himself.

'I am desirous of impressing this fact of the Lethe wish upon you,' said Uncle Peter, 'because to this we owe the comfort that no notice of Sir Lloyd's important political operations has ever appeared in the *Times*, or the *Illustrated News*, or the *Saturday Review*, or, indeed, in any paper, however well informed. Otherwise, the *Illustrated News* would have certainly presented us with a view of the Emperor of Morocco reposing in his study and perusing the *Social Science Magazine*; and of Mr. Pritchard, as he appeared when sitting on the shore of the Northern Ocean, and also in his bedroom on his return; all taken on the spot by special correspondents.'

My curiosity did not allow me to sleep again. I rose, and looked out of the window, to see, what I was sure I should see, on a certain rising meadow, which had been fixed on as the site for Lady Lloyd's new school—the building on which she had set her heart. Nor was I disappointed. In that pretty glade-like field, somewhat embowered with trees, there had risen, as by enchantment, a charming picturesque Gothic building of grey stone, with a little gabel bell-tower, and large and simple, but well-proportioned mullioned windows; and at one end was an equally

pretty cottage, for the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. It made quite a feature in the landscape. And it was evident that the Fairy's officials, whoever they were, had consulted with a good architect, perhaps had even ransacked Mr. Gilbert Scott's portfolios, and had carried out Lady Lloyd's wishes, in conformity with her own admirable taste and judgment. She herself was the first person whom I met on coming down stairs, and I could not but congratulate her on the success, thus far, of her wishes—of two of them at least.

'Yes,' she said; 'I have my school-room at last, and I have driven down already to see it. It is quite dry and habitable. And I am sure you will all come with me to-day at twelve o'clock. I have ordered that there should be an examination of the children, and the Fairies are to send a Government Inspector down. I am quite sure,' she continued, 'that the examination must go off well, for I have desired the Fairies to see that the children are perfect in their lessons. I am most ambitious, I confess, that a good report should be made to the Government. I shall never be satisfied till our own Rayadil School is the best in the county, and acknowledged to be so by the Privy Council, and therefore I naturally included this in my second wish. Education is so important, such a blessing! My first wish, I find, has been quite successful. Sir Lloyd has opened his *Times* and

Saturday Review, and there is not a single ill-natured word about us.'

As the examination was to take place at twelve o'clock, Lady Lloyd proposed to drive me down in her pony carriage, while the rest of the party strolled down through the gardens. And on our way she again expressed to me how often, and how ardently, she had wished for this opportunity of doing good which the excellent Fairy had now secured to her. And indeed her words were not mere words, nor her desires mere feelings. For day after day, I had known her go down, now through snow and rain, and now under a burning sun, to help Mrs. Haverstone in her simple instructions, and that in a room by no means agreeable to a delicate lady.

'Mrs. Haverstone,' she continued, 'is an excellent schoolmistress up to a certain point. She was bred up as lady's-maid by my mother-in-law, and then married our invaluable gardener. And she understands sewing, and knitting, and reading, and writing, and common spelling, and keeps the children in excellent order. But, of course, in these days much more is expected.'

As she uttered these words, we drove up to the porch of the new edifice, round which already the Fairies' hands had twined a luxuriant rose-tree full of blossom, besides making some well-trimmed flower-beds close by the paths.

'I ordered these,' said Lady Lloyd, in her usual sensible thoughtfulness, 'because children should always be accustomed to have pretty things within their reach, without spoiling them. We turn children into a bear-garden, where we allow them to deface everything they come near, because there is nothing in it valuable, and then we are obliged to build stone walls, and plant steel traps and spring guns, to shut them out of our private gardens, because they have never been taught to keep their hands from mischief and meddling.'

We found the inside of the school-room, unlike many modern buildings, as good as the outside—large, light, lofty, airy, and well ventilated, and hung with maps, and pictures, and all sorts of contrivances for teaching through the eye. At the same time arrived the Government Inspector—not, remember, any one of the gentlemen who are now Government Inspectors, but a new patent one, such as is to be developed, when the ideas of the Privy Council and the House of Commons are fully carried out in 1980 or thereabouts.

The usual introductions ensued, and the Inspector, with some degree of fussiness, and something of official conceit, and something of peremptory authority, entered the school-room.

'Very fair! pretty good!' he answered, rather contemptuously, to Lady Lloyd's enquiring eye; and

having taken out his foot-rule to measure the desks, having ascertained that provision had been made for the statutable number of cubic inches of air for respiration, and the statutable angle in the desk for supporting the hand in writing, and the statutably-shaped slates, and the statutable ingredients in the ink; and having—though with no great warmth of applause—assented to Lady Lloyd's hope that everything was right and as the Privy Council had ordered, he proceeded, followed by us all, to the dais, or raised floor, where the children were to be examined.

Poor Mrs. Haverstone, dressed in her brown sprigged cotton gown, with her neat white cap, and white kerchief up to her throat, was evidently in a state of considerable trepidation. It was a great honour and a great pride. And the new school-room was delightful: but still, how would the children answer? And as she looked at the stiff form, and the curled lip, and the cold eye of the Government Inspector (remember, I say once more, he was a new patent perfect one, not any of the present gentlemen, who are only in a chrysalis state, undeveloped, and will take time to become one of the perfect species, as the oyster wants time to wish itself into a man)—I say as Mrs. Haverstone looked with awe on his general appearance, she was much troubled in mind. But she nodded and made signs to the children to hold up their heads; and shook her finger awfully at Tommy

Toddles, who was trying to thrust a pin through Ezekiel Scroggs' trousers; which were, happily, however, of stout corduroy, and, as Homer expresses it, 'served as a bulwark to his tender flesh.' And then, as the awful Inspector had taken his seat, and we all had taken our seats on the right and left of him, Mrs. Haverstone timidly advanced, and proceeded to show him the copy-books and ciphering slates. These, however, he waved aside with a majestic air of contempt, as of little consequence, and, turning to Lady Lloyd, said that he proposed to examine the first class, the 'flower of the flock,' as he rather scornfully added. Mrs. Haverstone accordingly summoned up the first class; and the poor little urchins, terrified almost out of their wits and memories, first duly expressed their reverence by pulling the lock of hair which hung down, as if for that purpose, in front of their foreheads; and then—with only a little sly nudging and pushing from Jeremiah Higgs, who wished to retire as far as possible from the glare of the Inspector's eye—the students, as the Inspector called them, were marshalled in a tolerably regular semicircle in front of the dais.

'Which is your cleverest specimen?' asked the Inspector of Lady Lloyd.

'Harman,' she said, 'the red-faced boy with the freckles and the carroty hair. He is the son of a labourer on the estate, and is going to be employed

soon in keeping the crows from the wheat-field. He is certainly the cleverest boy we have.'

'Harman,' said the Inspector, with a sonorous and awful voice, 'stand upright, hold up your head.' And Harman did accordingly try to raise his drooping face, while his knees were knocking, and his fingers busily employed in picking at his corduroy trousers.

'What is your name?' said the Inspector.

'Timothy, M. or N.,' said Harman; and in anticipation of the next question, which usually followed in Mrs. Haverstone's routine, he was preparing to declare when, and by whom, that name was given him, but the Inspector stopped him short with a stern look of rebuke.

'Silence, boy! we have nothing to do with that here. Give me an exact account of the planetary system, especially of the planet Uranus.'

I looked aghast at poor Lady Lloyd, who looked equally aghast at poor Mrs. Haverstone, who, more aghast than either of us, turned pale, and hid her face in her hands. But to our equal amazement and relief, little Timothy proceeded, with great volubility and no stops, and in a sort of nasal chant, to give us a very full and correct account of the celestial universe.

'The planets are opaque bodies, which receive their light from the sun, and they are distinguished——'

'But perhaps,' said Uncle Peter, 'to give you the

best idea of Timothy's recitation without pauses or stops, I had better write down what he told us. Give me a pencil. Here is his account:—'

'And are distinguished from the fixed stars not only by their motion or revolution but by their not twinkling the elements of a planet are first its mean distance secondly its sidereal period thirdly eccentricity fourthly its inclination fifth place of nodes sixth longitude and seventh its own longitude at a fixed time motion of the planet continuing to move with the same velocity it will traverse three leagues in a minute one hundred' (here he stopped to take breath, but proceeded almost with the same velocity as the planet itself) 'and eighty in an hour and four thousand three hundred and twenty in a day and therefore judging——'

The Inspector, apparently satisfied with Timothy's knowledge, stopped him, and put him on upon the planet Uranus, which seemed to be an object of special interest. And I learnt afterwards that the Inspector had himself written a pamphlet on that important heavenly body. I confess I was myself not only so amazed at Harman's knowledge, but also so alarmed lest the Inspector should address a question to myself—an alarm which I perceived equally visible in the faces of Sir Lloyd and the Doctor—that I could only catch indistinctly a series of millions, billions, and trillions, mixed up with the words apogee,

perigee, aphelion, foci, meridian, and the like, which made me still further shrink back, and hide myself, as well as I could, behind the ample folds of Lady Lloyd's recovered crinoline.

'Very fair! very good!' exclaimed the Inspector, and he turned with the same condescending remark to Lady Lloyd, who, though wonderfully astonished, could not help looking at me with a triumphant smile at the success of her wish; while poor Mrs. Haverstone, who, like myself, had drawn back in mingled consternation and admiration, coloured up to the very tips of her ears, when the Inspector condescended to assure her that she had taught the children very well.

'And pray, madam, who is the next most promising specimen you have?'

'Jemima Dobbs,' said Lady Lloyd, 'sews best and knows her catechism most thoroughly;—that little girl in the blue pinafore; I am going to take her into the Home Farm, and she is to learn to milk the cows.'

'Jemima,' said the Inspector solemnly, wishing to be impressive, 'Jemima, you are about to devote your faculties and time to one of the most important branches of agricultural, or, I should say bovine or pecorine science. I trust your preliminary studies have been directed to this end. Explain to me succinctly the chemical properties and analysis of the lacteal acid.' And once more, as Sir Lloyd and

myself instinctively turned to each other with consternation, we were relieved by Jemima's bobbing a little curtsey, and then, without the slightest hesitation, running off into a sentence which had indeed no distinctive features of nominative cases and verbs, periods and commas, but which I was rejoiced to see gave the Inspector satisfaction, and was something to this effect :—

'And in a general sense denotes such things as affect the palate with a sour sharp and tart taste change blue vegetable colours to red and combine with all the alkalies and most of the metallic oxides and earths so as to form the compounds called salts acids are distinguished according to the proportion of oxygen which they contain by the terminations ic and ous as nitric acid and nitrous acid sulphuric acid sulphurous acid when the prefix hypo is added to either of these it denotes —'

But once more, though Jemima recovered her breath, and proceeded with her account, I lost my power of attention in astonishment, and not less in alarm, when the Inspector turned to me and observed, 'Very satisfactory ! I see she has been reading my own article in the "Encyclopædia."'

I bowed, and acquiesced in the wisdom of Jemima's seeking for information how to milk cows by perusing the best chemical treatises. And I was relieved when the Inspector patted her on the head (with his gloves

on), told her to sit down, and enquired for another promising student.

'Jemmy Twitch,' said Lady Lloyd, 'is also a good boy. He is in Long Division, and writes a fair hand, as you may see by his copy-book, only he fails in his spelling.'

'Jemmy Twitch, stand forward!' said the Inspector; and poor little Jemmy, with sandy hair, and a face plentifully indented with the smallpox, and a stature scarcely reaching to the Inspector's knees, did stand forward.

'Your name is Twitch?' said the Inspector.

'E'es, zur, it be,' said Jemmy.

'You are going,' said the Inspector, 'to be apprenticed to a tailor, are you not?'

'I be, said Jemmy.

'Explain, then, to me,' said the Inspector, 'the discriminating features of the several Semitic dialects. And state your grounds for agreeing or disagreeing with Professor Bopp's last theory of the Aramitic radicals and suffixes.'

Here even the philosophic Mr. Heathorn, who was a most scientific man, caught my eye, and I observed a twitching in his lip, as if he felt uneasy. And I could not help smiling, when the Inspector turned round and asked, if any of us would like to examine the boys on this subject—'a trite and commonplace subject,' he continued, 'which every educated man of

course understands; but we must condescend to children. You recollect,' he continued, turning to the Doctor, 'what Professor Hoffman says of that Tubingen Professor (I always forget his name) who has broached the last theory on the Cufic dialect. By-the-bye, what is the close of that famous sentence of his?'

And he proceeded to quote—I must own with a very inaccurate pronunciation—a long German sentence, and stopped in the middle, in order to inveigle the poor Doctor into a confession of ignorance of the remainder. But I came to the Doctor's relief, and, happily, was enabled to hint a doubt as to the propriety of the way in which the Inspector had pronounced some of the modified vowels. And as he was not prepared for any such criticism, he once more contented himself with asking us if any of us would wish to examine Twitch upon the Aramitic radicals. But we all, and most respectfully, declined to take the examination out of such excellent hands. What the answer of Jemmy Twitch was to the question, I really cannot remember; for there was so much of what Professor Bopp believed, and Professor Kopp thought, and Professor Booble imagined, and Professor Doodle felt sure of, and all was so mixed up together in a long interminable sentence—evidently a translation from the German, in which the key of the whole is always sure to be reserved for the end, as the key of a school-

boy's padlock may be usually found at the bottom of his carpet-bag; and clause was so stuffed into clause, as in the same carpet-bag, the tooth-brush is found in one shoe, the hair-brush in another, and a paper of sandwiches is carefully rolled up in the night-shirt; in fact, all, to my English uninstructed ear, was such a medley of hard words and dim ideas, that I thought it safest to cover my confusion at my ignorance, and prevent the Inspector from asking me any questions by simulating a paroxysm of coughing. But I evidently lost some valuable information. The great comfort was that the Inspector was thoroughly satisfied.

'Ah!' said he, turning to Mrs. Haverstone, 'that is a very promising boy. I see he has thoroughly embraced my hypothesis. You have made him read my last article in the *Westminster*.' Mrs. Haverstone coloured more scarlet than before, but dropped another curtsey, and was proceeding with her natural honesty to acknowledge that she had not been to Westminster. But the Professor, in the natural triumph of another adherent to his views, returned to Twitch.

'You agree with me, Twitch, do you not?' he said, with an encouraging smile. 'You are not a supporter of the Koppian Theory? Do you think Professor Boodle right in his view?'

Jemmy took a little time to deliberate upon the ambiguous construction of the question, and to guess accordingly whether it would be more satisfactory to

the Inspector that he should say yes, or no. Unhappily, in school-boy language, he made a bad shot, and replied, 'E'es, zur,' which is the Doric English dialect for 'yes, sir.'

'What!' cried the Inspector, 'do you think Professor Kopp right in his translation of the Sinaitic inscriptions?'

Happily, the tone and accent this time admitted no doubt of the response which was desired, and Twitch faltered out—

'No, zur, I doant,' and began to whimper; so that the Inspector, somewhat shaken in his confidence in the enlightened concurrence of the examinee with his own theory, set him aside, and enquired for another student.

I must not, however, dwell further in detail on the Examination. It is enough to say that little Biddy Wilkins, the poor widow's daughter, who was just spelling words of two syllables, shone much in meteorology; that Dicky Buncumbe distinguished himself in metaphysics, and Obadiah Jenkins, the ploughboy, in the elements of deontology. Little Molly Jones, the shoemaker's daughter, gave a brilliant history of galvanism, and Jonas White shone in acoustics, and even Silas Styles, the huge gigantic lout in smock-frock and hobnailed shoes, who, the week before, I knew could not distinguish between a B and a C, now succinctly but philosophically explained the effects of the

Crusades upon the monetary system of Europe, and connected with it the various theories of political economy which have subsequently influenced the political development of the English Constitution.

We all drew breath as the Examination came to a close. The Inspector, bowing to Lady Lloyd, uttered a few brief words of approbation, and told the children to continue to study as they were doing; for that a knowledge of the stars and planets, the acids and alkalies, the Semitic dialects, and German metaphysics, was the one thing needful to make them good and happy; and that when they were starving or sick, or had the toothache, or had lost their father or mother, or indeed in any human distress, it would be their one true comfort and consolation to know how many millions of miles the planet Saturn is from the sun; and to be able to distinguish an acid from an alkali, and give the proper scientific names to cabbages and potatoes. He dwelt also at some length on the blessed enlargement of men's minds in the nineteenth century, and their deliverance from prejudices in consequence of Privy Council grants and school inspection, showed how a universal reign of peace and brotherhood and love was at hand, from the diffusion of education, and concluded by an eloquent sentence, which had evidently been frequently used before, on the real difference between a man and a brute.

CHAPTER V.

LADY LLOYD'S SCHOOL DIFFICULTIES.

THE INSPECTOR was taking his hat to go away, when Mrs. Haverstone very timidly ventured to remind him that the children had not said their Catechism.

'Their what?' exclaimed the Inspector; 'the Catechism?'

'I trust,' he added, turning to Lady Lloyd, 'you have no exclusive teaching here—no sectarian dogmatism.'

Lady Lloyd coloured, and was about to reply, but the Inspector seized his hat, and once more addressing himself to the whole assembled party, he reminded them that the Government had, of course, no objection to seeing religion connected with education; indeed, they rather wished it should be, since religion has a tendency to prevent rebellions, and to obviate the necessity of a large expenditure on prisons and poor-rates; but then it must be religion in its simplicity, divested of all narrow-minded adherence to creeds. Nothing must be taught which could shock the feelings of others. And he added, threateningly,

that any attempt to propagate such notions, must be followed by a withdrawal of all money-grants from the British Legislature. A symptom of this error was the only thing objectionable he had found in the school which he had just examined.

Lady Lloyd, colouring still more, was on the point of answering, when I ventured to turn the Inspector's attention to another point. Requesting to say a few words to him in private, I drew him apart, and asked if he would have the kindness, before he took his departure, to speak to the children on a subject on which his voice, as that of a person commissioned by Her Majesty's Government, would have great weight. I informed him that there had been for some time a number of persons in the neighbourhood—Socialists, Chartists, and others—who had been disseminating, amongst the poor, doubts as to the right of Queen Victoria to the Crown ; some asserting her to be only the niece, others only the cousin, of the Duke of Kent. They had also put forth libellous statements as to the Queen's character and conduct, and Lady Lloyd had found herself obliged to refuse to admit into her school some of the children whose parents were most busied in propagating these falsehoods.

'These children,' I said 'were taught by their parents to spread the opinions which they held themselves. John Thomas and Peter Tibbs, for instance, were forbidden to sing "God save the Queen," and when

told to repeat the responses in the Litany prayers for the Queen, they stood up, put on their caps, and walked out of the church. Lady Lloyd could not undertake to argue with them, for children she thought were not to listen and argue, but to be taught and obey; and indeed she had no confidence in her own ability to reason a child at school out of lessons which it was learning at home. She had felt it best, therefore, not to attempt to educate any but the children of parents who either really believed Queen Victoria to be their lawful sovereign, or at any rate would not instruct their children to deny it. If Her Majesty's Inspector,' I added, 'would say a few words on this subject, I was sure it would be a great satisfaction to Lady Lloyd.'

The Inspector listened to this rather long speech with slight symptoms of impatience, and answered—

'Of course, of course! Loyalty and obedience are essential. A majority in the House of Commons has decidedly pronounced that they are to be inculcated. There can be no question, therefore, that it must be right to uphold them.'

'I know,' was my reply, 'that this is the case. Her Majesty's ministers would never dream of acting in opposition to the will of a majority of the House of Commons, the acknowledged standard of right and wrong in England, and all the British dependencies, whatever may be the case in other parts of the globe.

But these differences of opinion, so sad in themselves, yet which the grand principle of the freedom of the press requires us to permit and encourage, cause great trouble. If we could but get rid of the quarrels which they cause, the duties of the Government would be much lighter, and ministers would much less often be turned out of office.'

'Very true,' said the Inspector, gazing at me, as if he scarcely understood what I was aiming at.

'Well,' I continued, 'since you have been good enough to examine these children, an idea has suggested itself to me which I am very anxious to put before you. Might it not be one way to this important end—unity, I mean—if we were to carry out the principle which the Government has found so successful with regard to another important subject? These opinions touching the Queen, are, after all, only opinions. Witnesses may indeed be called to prove the questions disputed; but you know as well as I do that witnesses are always incorrect, their senses are perpetually deceived, and they are often intentionally false. And the world in general has dogmatised so much upon the asserted fact of the Queen's right to the throne, that it has become a matter of self-interest now to almost all persons to support it. Would it not therefore be the most fair mode of dealing with these controversies if we placed all the opinions upon the same footing? Rebels and traitors are only men,

whose opinions have taken a different direction from our own on the duty of obedience to a sovereign—or the facts which demand their obedience—and certainly they carry out their views very consistently, and with a boldness and ingenuity which we must respect, and sometimes even admire.'

The Inspector opened his eyes still more widely; but without noticing his surprise, I continued—

'Why condemn them for that which we should do ourselves under the same circumstances? especially when we consider that opinions are formed entirely by the pressure of external objects upon the brain, and therefore without any moral responsibility. Looking at the case in this way, one sees at once that a man ought no more to be punished for having a wrong opinion on the subject of obedience to his sovereign, than for having a cold in the head.'

This idea seemed to approve itself more to the Inspector's mind, and he nodded approbation, and murmured, 'Very good; very true.'

'You would not then object,' I said, 'if Lady Lloyd, notwithstanding her horror of disloyalty, were to permit opinions opposite to her own to be expressed openly; in fact, if she made no distinction between traitors and good citizens?'

'But—but,' stammered the Inspector, with more than slight hesitation, 'that would be——' He was embarrassed in finishing his sentence, and ended it

with, 'the magistrates and the Queen herself would scarcely approve of this.'

'Oh! as to magistrates and judges, and persons of that kind,' I replied, 'they are, from their very position, narrow-minded. They have not the slightest conception of the grand discovery of the nineteenth century, that the contradictory may be just as right and just as true, or, which amounts to the same thing, that no human being can tell which is true and which is false. Persons who do not believe in human testimony, and know no other test of truth than each individual's inner consciousness, cannot allow their minds to be warped by the antiquated ideas of judges and magistrates.'

'I think—I believe I see what you mean,' said the Inspector, faintly; 'yet still——'

'I am so glad you do!' I exclaimed, interrupting him. 'Lady Lloyd then would receive into her school the children of all parents alike; and viewing their opinions upon the Queen's right to the throne as indifferent, she would not object to their spreading them amongst the other children.'

'But Lady Lloyd must teach loyalty,' said the Inspector, impatiently. 'The English people, and therefore the majority of the House of Commons, will never encourage a system of education which does not make the children loyal.'

'Of course, of course,' I replied. 'Loyalty must be

taught. Only there is this difficulty: How can the children be made loyal, if they are allowed to question the Queen's right to the throne? And how can we convince them of her right, without putting before them certain facts—dogmas I suppose they would be called—though I don't like to use an antiquated word which has now passed away for ever—at any rate, certain definite statements about the Queen's parentage, which would really be a kind of creed? I shall be grateful if you can solve the problem.'

Before the Inspector could attempt an answer, a loud cry was heard from the further end of the school-room, from which our attention had been diverted whilst we were conversing privately. That naughty, troublesome, red-haired boy Tommy Toddles had again been insinuating a pin into Ezekiel Scroggs' corduroy trousers—this time with considerable success.

'Toddles and Scroggs come up here,' said Mrs. Haverstone. 'You wicked boy Toddles, haven't I told you twenty times that you are not to run pins into Scroggs?'

Toddles hung down his head, but said nothing.

'Haven't I told you repeatedly that you are to love Scroggs?'

'Why am I to love him?' muttered Toddles, with a very black and sulky brow, and giving at the same time a sidelong look at the corduroy trousers, as if meditating another insertion on the first opportunity.

'Tommy Toddles,' I said to him with great severity, 'it is not for you to ask such a question. When the authorities in the school tell you that you are to love him, you must love him. And you, Scroggs,' I added, turning to the other boy, 'remember that you love Toddles.'

'He is always a teasing me,' cried poor Scroggs, with the tears running down his cheeks; 'he's a liar, and tells tales out of school.'

'Scroggs,' I said to him, impressively and solemnly, 'this may or may not be true. It may be your opinion that he has done so, but Toddles may have another opinion.'

'Jemmy Twitch, and Stubbs, and Atkins, and all the boys have seen him tease me,' cried Scroggs.

'Scroggs,' I said, 'little boys like you, who do not know better, think they prove a fact by bringing witnesses to it. We, who are older and wiser, know that witnesses are never to be trusted. It is therefore quite impossible for us to decide whether what you state is true or not. But, as I said to Toddles, when you are told by the authorities to love each other, you must obey. I am sure you will be good friends ever after this. Now go back to your seats. How I wish,' I continued, addressing the Inspector, 'how I wish these simple principles could be more generally diffused! What trouble it would save. Only last week I was kept two whole days at the assizes examining

witnesses in an assault case, and all this time would have been saved if the judge had only at once told the jury that it was impossible to believe any witnesses, and so had dismissed the plaintiff and defendant with an injunction to love each other.'

'Something more would be required than an injunction,' said the Inspector, rather grimly.

'Well, yes, probably; at any rate the reconciliation should be proved by some external act. Do, Mrs. Haverstone, go to those boys, and make them shake hands and kiss each other! I know,' I continued, turning to the Inspector, 'that this is the fundamental idea of the Government. Bring children together who are taught by their parents to hate each other, and who do hate each other, and doubtless they will soon love each other. Nothing so promotes affectionate sympathy as hourly contact and collision. They are going to adopt this same newly-discovered law of nature in surgery,' I continued. 'Dr. O'Callaghan is now trying the experiment in his hospital in Ireland. When a leg is broken, instead of splintering the limb, and keeping it perfectly quiet, as they used to do, they now rub the ends of the broken bone together every five minutes, to make them unite more quickly. It gives pain, but it is thought to be the plan contemplated by nature.'

I was proceeding to confirm Dr. O'Callaghan's theory by the happy result of united education in

Ireland, when we were stopped by a great disturbance observable at the bottom of the room. Mrs. Haverstone had taken hold of the arms of Toddles and Scroggs, and whilst the boys glared at each other like wild cats, had succeeded, as she thought, in enforcing a fraternal embrace, in a time shorter even than that in which the London Conference established an everlasting friendship between France and Prussia. But, alas! a cry was heard—a cry which reached even the Inspector and myself.

'Oh! he has bit me on the cheek!'

And we found, indeed, to our great indignation, that each had taken advantage of the affectionate embrace to which he had been compelled, and given his reconciled friend a severe bite.

'This is really too bad,' said Lady Lloyd, who had now joined us. 'What can be done to make those boys behave properly?'

'It must be the effect of the controverted questions, I am afraid,' was my reply. Really the Privy Council, understanding so thoroughly as they do the nature of education, ought to draw up a few simple rules for giving children right feelings, without discussing any disputed principles. They would be so useful in other cases. Just think what an advantage it would be if in the great International Exhibitions which are set on foot for the express purpose of promoting fraternity and unity, everybody was ordered to kiss

everybody, without asking whether they were French or English, Dutch or Chinese. How it would foster a true and enlarged spirit of European, and indeed of human, concord.'

As I said this, Lady Lloyd—not entering, as she might have been expected to do, into my theories—walked away to have a little practical conversation with Mrs. Haverstone in reference to the two delinquents.

The Inspector murmured something about the duty of avoiding everything which might stir up strife; but he seemed rather confused in his ideas, and I did not thoroughly catch his words. I continued—

'It has just struck me, that, as we are so perplexed about this question of loyalty, it might be a good plan to make all the children write frequently in their copy-books, in large letters, "Love and honour the Queen." We might even have some texts prettily illuminated hung on the walls. And I should think it likely to have a remarkably good effect also if Toddles and Scroggs were to have no other copy to write for the next month, but, "Love Toddles," and "Love Scroggs."'

'But it might be as well also,' said the Inspector, 'if they did not sit so close to each other.'

'We had thought of this,' I said; 'but then it is contrary to the Privy Council principle of promoting peace by bringing into close contact persons who disagree.'

'They should have no pins to run into each other,' persisted the Inspector.

'True,' I said, 'we had forgotten to take away the pins; but even without them they will fight.'

'Tie their hands,' was the reply.

'But they have legs,' I rejoined, 'and will kick.'

'Strap their legs together,' said the Inspector.

'Still they have tongues, and will call each other names.'

'Gag them!' exclaimed the Inspector, in a tone which showed that he would willingly have gagged me.

'Well,' I said, 'no doubt you are right. They must be silenced. And if the end cannot be obtained in one way, it must be in another. So, perhaps, it may be as well not to put up the scrolls I was proposing, but rather to prohibit all allusions to any subjects on which there are differences of opinion.'

'Yes,' said the Inspector, gravely, 'always excepting a general recommendation to loyalty.'

'The only difficulty I foresee,' I said, 'is with regard to English History. They must learn it, I suppose?'

'Certainly, certainly; it is essential!'

'We might, possibly,' I said, after a moment's thought, 'get an interesting and graphic English History drawn up, free from all allusion to party questions; especially there might be no allusion to

Queen Victoria's predecessors, or indeed to any points which involved her right to the throne.'

'It would be difficult,' replied the Inspector, 'but it certainly would be useful.'

'One great advantage,' I continued, 'would be, that when everything has been cut out from English History on which there has been a difference of opinion, the remainder would be easily learnt, and, indeed, I suspect, we should find the quantity so small, that it might be better to leave it out altogether. All history, in fact, brings us upon similar controverted points, and may be better omitted. No sacrifice is too great for peace. I wish, though, we could keep the fathers and mothers from talking upon political subjects at home. I believe they actually have meetings to which they take their children, and at which these treasonable subjects are discussed; and it is no use to tell the children not to talk; for the more you *taboo* a subject, the more everyone is inclined to chatter about it.'

'But that will easily be put a stop to,' said the Inspector, impatiently: 'tell them that the subject is of no consequence, that no one cares anything about it, and that it is for that reason it is so strictly forbidden.'

'Lady Lloyd will scarcely like that,' I said; 'she is so devoted to the Queen. And, in fact, the parents themselves—good-for-nothing rebels though some of

them are—would scorn her for it. Knowing Lady Lloyd's professed principles, they would think her unconscientious if she were not to teach what she believes.'

'Oh, that troublesome conscience!' exclaimed the Inspector; 'it is the cause of all our perplexities. But one thing there is no doubt of, that the Government will never allow the children to be taught anything to which they have a conscientious objection. Lady Lloyd must meet that difficulty as best she can.'

'It is unquestionably a most charitable and liberal arrangement,' I said, 'and if you insist upon it, of course it must be carried out; but as Lady Lloyd has put this matter into my hands, and as I see she herself has left the room (I think she is gone to speak to Mrs. Haverstone's invalid niece), may I be allowed in your presence just to explain it to the children, or, as I believe you wish them to be called, the students, in order that they may understand that whatever is done, is in obedience to the commands of the Government, and not merely from a wish of Lady Lloyd's?'

The Inspector made no objection, and the first class was recalled from the playground, to which all the children had been dismissed at the close of the Examination.

Placing them before me, I addressed them as follows:—

'Children, you are aware that it is one of the first objects of Her Majesty's Government, of whom the gentleman who has examined you with so much care is the representative, that all the students in the schools which they support, should be educated together, without any attempt to violate their liberty of conscience. We are told that some of you have been taught by your parents that Queen Victoria is not your lawful sovereign, and indeed that there ought to be no king or queen in England, or in any other country. I carefully abstain from saying what I think myself on this question, because I have no right to bias your minds, except in such matters as reading and writing, spelling, arithmetic, and the like. But I wish you to inform me if you do entertain views of this kind, in order that you may be relieved from attending any lessons where the instruction given might shock your feelings. Any of you, therefore, who, from the political principles which you have learned at home, object conscientiously to learn the History of England—especially the list of kings and queens, with the dates—hold up your hands, and you will be allowed to play whilst the other boys, who have no such scruples, will have their history lessons.'

A forest of hands was held up at once. All had decided conscientious objections to the History of England, and especially the dates.

'Well! I said, children; as I find your conscientious principles so deeply rooted, remember to tell Mrs. Haverstone, whenever you are requested to learn anything which you do not like, or which your parents wish you not to learn, and Mrs. Haverstone will pay due respect to your scruples, and not insist upon your learning the lesson.'

'Please, sir,' said Scroggs, 'mother does not see the good of the multiplication table. It bothers me, and I had a headache last Saturday.'

'I don't see the good of geography,' muttered Dobbs.

'And please, sir,' said Toddles, 'I don't want to learn spelling.'

'Well!' I said, 'my boys, these are not exactly political subjects, but still they may be taken into consideration, as involving the same question of freedom of opinion. As to the history, you must explain to Mrs. Haverstone what particular points you object to, and she will arrange so as to have in each class only those boys and girls who like to be taught the same thing. You must be careful about this,' I added, turning to Mrs. Haverstone; 'for if you should happen to have several students in the same class, each objecting to a separate part of your instruction, it might end in your being prevented from teaching anything, which would not be satisfactory.'

Here the Inspector interposed, and suggested a

plan which he said had been already used, and found successful.

'Suppose you wish to teach history,' he said; 'fix your instruction at some particular hour in the day—and take especial care that you never teach history of any kind in connection with any other lesson—then let the different parents find some one with their own views to give separate instruction at that hour to each child, or class of children, in conformity with their own conscientious convictions.'

'Admirable!' I exclaimed; just what is wanted! Mr. Thomas, the Socialist, I have no doubt would undertake the History department for the infant Socialists; Mr. Brown, the Liberal Conservative, would undertake the juvenile Conservatives; and Mr. Cox, the Radical, would, I am sure, like nothing better than to give a lecture to the young Radicals. It may indeed be putting pins into the students' hands, instead of taking them away; and it will be difficult to arrange such a plan so as to agree with that total suppression of the subject, which we thought so desirable. But still, as it has been tried, and successfully, in other places——'

I was interrupted by the reappearance of Lady Lloyd, and I turned to her; and after briefly explaining this new plan, asked if she had any objection to it.

But the Inspector gave her no time to reply.

'Lady Lloyd,' he said, 'had already done so much

for the purpose of establishing the school, there could be no doubt that she would be willing to do more. The Government looked for support especially to those interested in education, and who had made the greatest sacrifices for it.'

'You mean,' I said, 'those who have been sacrificed already, and therefore are the most accustomed to it?'

The Inspector evaded an answer, and Lady Lloyd observed that she should scarcely have taken the trouble to found a school, if she had thought that she was not at liberty to teach the children what she believed to be the truth.

'As for foundations,' replied the Inspector, 'you must pardon me for saying, we are inclined to think all charitable foundations, especially those intended for education, a mistake, a blunder of the dark ages. They are sure to require perpetual correction; they have not done half the good they might have done, and therefore it is better they should not exist at all.'

I ventured to suggest that if this test were applied to ourselves, or to art, or nature, or things in general, I feared only very few would be kept in existence.

But the Inspector, without noticing my remark, continued—

'The mere idea of perpetuating institutions upon fixed principles is now abandoned. When there is no such thing as a fixed principle, when we have reached that sublime point in the development of man, the cer

tainty that there is no certainty—the great truth that there is no truth—to found schools for future generations is quite a delusion. Possibly, where a good round sum has been left, a founder might secure for his school a duration of fifty years, but after that time the funds will, in all probability, fall into the hands of Government, to be employed in a contrary direction. In fact, things must be left free; hands must not be shackled. Fifty years hence the English mind—looking at the progress which it is making every day—will be very different from what it is now; principles, convictions, all will be changed. We have indeed nothing to rest upon, but, as I said before, the great truth that there is no truth.'

'And is this to be the end of my school?' exclaimed Lady Lloyd, colouring with indignation.

But the Inspector, evidently wearied with the subject, waved his hand, and bowed himself out of the room, and at the same moment our attention was called to a group of children and parents, who had entered just before the Inspector departed, and were now standing round the dais.

'Please, my lady,' said Harman's father, coming forward, 'my boy answered so well that I and my good woman don't think he needs to go to school any more.'

'Please, my lady' (it was Jemima's mother), 'Jemima is not coming up to the farm. She wants to go out as a governess.'

'Please, my lady' (Jemmy Twitch himself appeared), 'Mrs. Haverstone says she don't know nothing about the Shemitic Dialogues, and I sha'n't be under her any more.'

'Mother says, please my lady, she hopes you will find me a good place.' This was Biddy Wilkins's daughter.

Whilst Jonas White thrust himself forward with—

'Please, my lady, as I knows all about a cow's sticks, I want to be a schoolmaster myself.'

A multitude of similar applications were evidently in readiness to be launched, and seemed to threaten the dissolution of the school. But a nearer peril now manifested itself. A great uproar was heard in the school-yard, and the flying of stones through the windows warned us that we were in peril ourselves.

On going out, I found that the members of several of the political parties in Rayadil, who, though differing in details of opinion, all sympathised in the duty of dethroning Queen Victoria, had assembled in the school-yard, hoping, no doubt, to gain, by an appeal to the Inspector, some favourable verdict against Lady Lloyd's system of exclusion. And they had been successful. The Inspector had communicated to them his proposed plan for admitting children of all opinions to the school, and allowing peculiar instructions upon politics to be given at a particular hour; and Mr. Thomas, the Socialist, Mr. Cox, the Radical, Mr.

Rogers, of the Trades Union, Mr. Boodle, of the Reform League, Mr. Smith, of the Democratic Society, and Mr. Potts, of the Revolutionary Club, had thereupon endeavoured to collect their various flocks around them, and had insisted upon the duty of attendance upon their several lectures. All professed to teach the same subject, and to give lessons inculcating liberty, equality, and fraternity, but the flocks thus separated had begun to look askance at each other, and even to hiss, and hoot, and call each other names, until at length they had unanimously fallen upon the party who still professed some reverence for Queen Victoria, and had proclaimed universal liberty of thought by launching a shower of stones against them.

From this it was an easy step to a general battle, in which the leading lecturers themselves were taking an active part.

I looked out into the school-yard in dismay, not seeing a way of escape; but, fortunately, the police almost immediately arrived; and when the tumult was a little stilled, I drew Lady Lloyd's arm within mine, and led her through the crowd, observing as we passed that the successful answerers no longer thought it necessary to lower their dignity by taking off their caps to her. I placed her in the pony carriage, and we drove homewards. She was evidently much cast down. And yet she could not refrain from exclaiming—

'How wonderfully well they answered! How successful the pill was!'

'Wonderful!' I said.

Just at this moment Harman, the Admirable Crichton of the day, ran past, with his nose bleeding from the combat, and himself pursued by two of some opposite faction, who retired, however, as they saw Harman come up and seek shelter under our protection, though in a very blubbering, discomfited, and dilapidated condition. I could not help stopping the carriage to ask about his nose.

'And now,' I said, 'my boy, you will understand and appreciate the blessing it is to know about the planet Uranus. Does it not ease the pain? Think,' I said, 'how many millions of miles it is from the sun, and comfort yourself with the thought. Perhaps it may stop the bleeding.'

But the answers he had given had evidently escaped from the poor boy's brains. They had been crammed into it by the Fairies for the examination; and as soon as the examination was over, they had all dropped out. He evidently knew no more how many millions of miles Uranus was from the sun, than, honestly to tell the truth, I knew myself. And I therefore never had the advantage of ascertaining what powerful effect such knowledge might produce in soothing a broken head, or compensating for a knocked out tooth.

CHAPTER VI.

A SUCCESSFUL WISH.

HOWEVER untoward some of the events of the day had seemed, Lady Lloyd recovered her spirits, as we drove out of the town, and descended towards the old grey bridge, which crosses the Lug, near the entrance to the garden. It was the same spot where the day before I had found the crowd dragging the river for Mr. Pritchard.

'I am sure,' she said, 'I have now a treat which you at least will enjoy. My third wish I am sure will be successful.'

And we soon overtook a number of old women dressed in their best red cloaks, and leading little children by their hands, and groups of the townspeople of different classes, who all curtsied, or nodded, or bowed, and took off their hats, with smiles and cheerful faces, as we passed them. I caught the sound of some music, like the Volunteers' band, from the midst of a great clump of rhododendra in the gardens. And I guessed at once what kind of enjoyment for the day

the pill had produced. We stopped at the little iron gate, entered the garden by the lower walk; and, I must own, a prettier or more agreeable sight I have rarely seen. It was one of Lady Lloyd's *fêtes champêtres*, or, in more homely language, tea-drinkings, for the poor people of the town and neighbourhood, in her own garden. There were no stifling tents, or gaudy bunting, no clumsy arches of withered laurel; no unpleasant smelling lamps; only the smooth shaven lawn, the great spreading oaks and firs, throwing their shadow over a small sheet of water, clear as crystal, and alive with darting trout, the parterres of blossoms bright as jewels, a blue sky overhead, and the sunlight flickering the lawn with the richest lacework of light and shadow. And in front of Mr. Haverstone, the gardener's cottage—thatched, and whitewashed, and mantled with roses and choice creeping plants—were plain deal boards laid on tressels, but covered with the whitest of cloths, and decorated with some of the choicest plants from the greenhouse. Here Mrs. Alsop, the housekeeper, was busily arranging teacups and saucers, urns, and teapots, and huge dishes of cake and bread and butter. As we approached, the band struck up, 'God save the Queen,' and round Lady Lloyd—who, as may well be imagined, was, like Sir Lloyd, much beloved in the neighbourhood—gathered knots of poor people. And there was the kind word for one, and the kind enquiry for another; and a

knowledge of the wants and wishes, the circumstances and the character of each, which, more than any money, proves sympathy and wins hearts. Others in the meantime scattered themselves over the lawn. Emma was busily engaged in punting two old ladies about in a flat-bottomed boat on the pond, to their great delight; others seated themselves quietly in the shade, or strolled about, admiring Mr. Haverstone's hothouse, and conservatory, and new grapery, his ribband beds of flowers, his beautiful rock-work and fernery, and, not least, the Alpine bridge, near the circular spring—that Alpine bridge so tastefully arranged—two feet wide, and nearly three feet long, thrown over a rocky chasm at least two feet and a half deep, at the foot of which was a little mill-wheel, wonderfully kept in motion, and actually clicking and going round under the pressure of a tiny rivulet, which issued from the aforesaid circular spring, as bright as crystal, and hurried through a thicket of alders and rhododendra to loose itself in the pond. This circular spring is not to be forgotten, for it will reappear again in the course of our history. It was surprising and interesting to see the curiosity and enjoyment produced by this tiny toy. And when it was announced that tea was ready, and Mr. Studley, the curate, had said grace at the upper end of the table, and we all sat down together, dispensing ourselves where we could best assist in promoting the hospitalities of the

feast, there was such a happy expression on all faces, such a hum of merry voices, the old women sipped their tea with such zest, the young women helped the children to such prodigious masses of bread and butter and plum-cake; the young men were so attentive in waiting on the young women, and altogether there was such a light-hearted sound of laughter, chattering, and gossip, yet all tempered to quiet by great respect, that I could not help taking an opportunity of thanking Lady Lloyd for the treat.

'Yes,' she said, 'the poor people look forward to meetings of this kind (which we have from time to time) as the greatest pleasure they have in the year; and it is very inexpensive, considering the amount of enjoyment given. One or two stupid dinner-parties to persons who only think them an annoyance, cost far more.'

'And are the flowers ever damaged?' I asked.

'No,' she said, 'not in the least; the children are so careful. I am satisfied that the reason why English people are so mischievous is, that we shut ourselves up, and never allow the poor to come into our grounds and houses; so that, when they do come, they do not know how to behave. Haverstone complains a little that the lawn is trampled down where they dance, but it soon recovers. And he says the people go away in such good temper with us, that they never break down our fences, or pull the trees to pieces, or, in short, do any harm on the estate.'

'Well,' I said, 'I wish all gentlemen would employ their grounds for similar purposes. We should then have no fears of a Reform Bill. And one blessing is, we can do this without a pill.'

'Yes ——' said Lady Lloyd.

But at this moment a servant came up with the letters from the post.

'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'two from Canada, which I must read as soon as I can.'

'I trust,' I said, 'your brothers are quite well.' For I knew Lady Lloyd had two brothers, to whom she was devotedly attached, and who had an estate in Canada, where she had spent many happy years of her life.

Lady Lloyd glanced over the letters rapidly, and deposited them in her reticule.

'Quite well, thank you,' was her reply to my question. And there was a peculiar archness and significance in her look, which struck me.

'Ah!' she said, 'how often I have heard you say you would like to go to Canada.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'if it were not for the trouble, and the expense, and the long voyage, there are few countries I should like better to see.'

'All of you the other day,' she continued, 'wished to see my brothers' place, Pennicocosheetag.' And once more there was a singular significance in her smile.

But Mrs. Haverstone came up to ask if—as tea was

over—the children might begin dancing. And accordingly I was despatched to tell the band to play, 'Polly, put the kettle on'—the children were duly marshalled for a country dance—the band struck up—and, the children hopping, jumping, and twirling about, and screaming with delight, the dance commenced. Presently the elders of the party joined in. The young men carried off their partners; Lady Lloyd took Tommy Toddles to dance with her; Miss Rosa insisted on my leading her to her place; Sir Lloyd carried off Mrs. Aberleigh; even the grave philosopher, Mr. Heathorn, was seized on by Mrs. Heathorn against his will—except that neither husband nor wife ever seemed so happy as when they were together, and doing something which the other wished. Only the poor lame Doctor, and Mrs. Beaumont, still busy with her benevolent knitting for his comforter, remained sitting together under the great oak, enjoying the sight. I do not know how long we danced, but the shadows began to stretch farther across the lawn, the sun—like a vast liquid globe of molten gold—was rolling down upon the great hump-backed mountain of Pendragon, which closes the valley to the west, when Lady Lloyd, calling the house party together, begged that we would all be dressed punctually by seven, and dressed rather more than usual, as she had another treat for us; and she was sure we should put confidence in her, and be as grateful for the fourth, as we certainly were for the

third of her wishes. It was in vain that we petitioned to know what happiness was in store for us. She only repeated her instructions to us, to be dressed punctually by seven, and dressed rather more than usual.

Just then a clock struck half-past six, the hour for breaking up our present party. So the band once more played 'God save the Queen,' the poor women came up and shook hands with Lady Lloyd, the young men bowed, the young girls curtsied; and with three cheers for Sir Lloyd and Lady Lloyd, and three cheers for the Queen, we left them, departing from the gardens, and ourselves proceeded to the house.

'Very pleasant!' we all said.

'Very pleasant! I do not know when I have enjoyed a party more.'

'And so easy! Almost anyone with grounds and a garden could do it.'

'Yes,' I added, 'and without a pill.'

But this condition did not seem to impress others with any remarkable gratification; for we had recovered from the alarm and annoyance of Sir Lloyd's experiment in our behalf, and were at present in full security, endeavouring to imagine the further enjoyment which was now in preparation for us.

CHAPTER VII.

LADY LLOYD'S FOURTH WISH.

BEFORE the first dressing-bell we were all in our rooms. I was not a little tired with the exertions of the day, but had a great dread of unpunctuality. And there was such an earnestness in the manner with which Lady Lloyd had enjoined us to be ready by seven, that without delay I finished my toilette, and just as the clock in the inner hall began to strike the hour, I found myself at the drawing-room door. I opened it, but, to my extreme astonishment and perplexity, it was a room I had never seen before. The fireplace was where the windows should have been, the windows where the fireplace. I looked for the great picture of Sir Lloyd's father, and his presentation as Ambassador to the Emperor of China, but it was not there. The room was large and low, the furniture rather disordered, as if it had been recently occupied; and it was of a strange character—old-fashioned and rather rude—chiefly of birch wood and maple wood, with curious covers of a sort of bark or leather, em-

broidered with white. The walls were stained deal, and were ornamented with some cases of stuffed birds, of a very exotic character; while in one corner lay a heap of skins and furs. In fact, the appearance, to my eyes, was perfectly unaccountable; and though I knew that Lady Lloyd had contemplated new furnishing the drawing-room, I was satisfied that this was not the form which, in her good taste, she would have selected. But I had no time to ponder on the question, for I was startled by a piercing shriek, which sounded from one corner of the room, and which issued from no less a personage than Lady Shropshire—or rather, as I ought to call her by her full title, the Marchioness—who was, I have before said, one of the nearest neighbours to Brooklyn, and an accomplished, sensible, excellent person, with whom the whole party were on more than ordinary terms of county intimacy and friendship.

'Oh!' she exclaimed 'where am I? What can have happened? Where am I?' And she sank down upon a hard sofa covered with black horsehair. She was attired in a morning dress, and wore a pair of thick and not overclean gloves; one hand held a basket, in which lay a pair of scissors, and a quantity of dead leaves and overblown flowers, and in the other was a small green watering-pot. It was evident that she had been working in her conservatory, of which she was very fond.

'Oh, Uncle Peter!' she cried, as she caught sight of me; 'you here! What a comfort! Where are we? What can have happened to us?'

'My dear Lady Shropshire,' I replied, 'I believe you are at Brooklyn. At least, I was there a minute ago.'

'Brooklyn!' she said. 'And I was at Woodleigh, in the conservatory, a minute ago. But this is not Brooklyn. I never was in this room before. Look out at the window.'

And I did look out, and, to my great astonishment, instead of the green bank, and old oaks, and flat expanse of turf, and the meadow covered with grazing cattle, and terminated by the grey square tower of Rayadil Church, rising out of a grove of limes and poplars, and backed by the steep woody ridges of Copley hill, I saw a vast sea or lake, I could not tell which, studded with numerous rocky islands, and those islands clothed with pine-trees; while a pine forest extended along the shore as far as the eye could reach.

'Where are we? what is it?' again exclaimed Lady Shropshire.

And then a similar voice of terror, despair, and indignation broke forth from another female figure, which lay abandoned on another sofa. It was the Baroness Sapieka, Lady Shropshire's favourite niece. 'Where are we, I say? Where are we?'

'I really have not a notion,' I replied. 'It is clear we are not at Brooklyn.'

As I uttered the words I looked round, and there was Sir Lloyd, a picture of equal amazement. 'What is the matter?' he said. 'What can have become of us? Where are we?'

Fortunately, at this moment there appeared two other persons, with faces radiant with joy, Mrs. Aberleigh and Emma.

'Oh dear!' they both exclaimed, 'is not this delightful?'

'Delightful!' said Lady Shropshire, with the calmness of a martyr.

'Delightful!' shrieked the Baroness, with increasing indignation at the liberty which some supernatural power had evidently taken to bring her somewhere without her own consent.

'Delightful!' said Sir Lloyd in consternation.

'Yes,' replied Mrs. Aberleigh,' don't you know this? Oh, I forgot you were never here before. But you must have seen Mary's drawings of this place, and of the room.'

'Where is it? Where are we?' again cried the Baroness.

'At Pennicocosheetag,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, calmly.

'Penny what?' repeated the Baroness.

'Pennicocosheetag, replied Mrs. Aberleigh, 'where Mary was born—my sons' place.'

'Where is it?' again enquired the Baroness, in a voice of increasing excitement.

'In Canada,' said Mrs. Aberleigh.

The Baroness fell back in a stupor of bewilderment and horror, exclaiming, 'How did we get here? Who brought us here? How shall we get home?'

But in a moment I saw the whole mystery, and came forward to console her.

'You must not,' I said, 'be the least alarmed. Pray compose yourself. There is nothing in the world the matter. The fact is, that Lady Lloyd this morning took a little pill; that is all.'

'Took a what!' shrieked the Baroness.

'A pill,' I said—'only a small pill.'

But before I could proceed with my explanation, Lady Lloyd stood herself by the Baroness's side.

'Pray, pray don't be frightened!' she said. 'I thought you would have so enjoyed it. Do you not remember when I was calling the other day at Woodleigh, you said you should so like to see Pennicocosheetag?'

'Penny what!' again exclaimed the indignant Baroness.

'Pennicocosheetag,' said Lady Lloyd reproachfully —my brothers' place.'

'I never said anything of the kind,' rejoined the Baroness.

'Pardon me; indeed you did,' replied Lady Lloyd.

'I was describing it to you, and you said you should so like to see it. And so did Lady Shropshire.'

'I never meant it! I never meant it!' exclaimed the Baroness; 'but you bored me so dreadfully by talking about it. It was only to get rid of you. I hate the very name of the place. I shall go back at once by the first train.'

'I have a large party to dinner to-day at Woodleigh,' said Lady Shropshire, with the resignation of a saint. 'The Duke and Duchess of Brecon—their first visit since their marriage! What shall I do? But I don't understand now how we got here? Who brought us here?'

'It was the pill,' I said—'the Fairy.'

Lady Shropshire gazed at me calmly, but with her eyes and mouth both opened to their fullest extent?

'Yes,' I said, replying to her look of astonishment, 'the Fairy who lives up in the forest by the waterfall.'

'I do not believe a word of it,' said Lady Shropshire, firmly. 'It is a dream. It must be a dream. Come here,' she said to me, 'come and pinch me, to see if it is a dream. Not too hard!' she cried. 'Let me pinch you.' And she inflicted on me a pinch, of which I bore the mark for several days, and which convinced me that I at least was not dreaming.

'We must,' she said, 'be all mad—all mad together. And this is an asylum.'

'No indeed, indeed it is not!' said Mrs. Aberleigh.

'It is Pennicocosheetag. And my sons will be here directly to welcome us.'

Poor Lady Lloyd was sadly disconcerted to find that the two friends, whom, in the simplicity of her mind, she really believed to speak the truth, when they had professed—as ladies often do profess—that they were dying to see persons and places, for which they did not care a jot, had expressed their wish merely for the purpose of filling up the pauses in a morning call, or covering a yawn at her uninteresting tale. In simple faith in their sincerity, she had resolved to give them a gentle surprise, by including them in the family party to Pennicocosheetag. It was a great blow; and partly to distract her thoughts, and recover her equanimity, she turned and looked round the room, to see if any of her friends were missing. Some of them were there in full dinner-dress: Rosa and Mrs. Heathorn, looking the picture of amazement, Mrs. Heathorn clinging to Mr. Heathorn in an agony of alarm. But the Doctor was nowhere to be seen.

'Where can he be?' I said. 'I do hope he has not been dropped by the way.'

'I'm here, I'm here!' faltered a voice from behind a large old-fashioned screen of gilt leather. 'I'm here!' And as we went to see from whence the voice proceeded, we found indeed the Doctor, but certainly not in a condition which rendered him producible in a drawing-room before dinner. He was, in fact, in his

dressing-gown and slippers, one of his shoes in one hand, and his hair-brush in the other. He explained to us that, being very tired with the morning's amusement, he had taken off his coat and waistcoat, and lain down on the sofa in his room, and had so dropped off to sleep; and was only awakened by Lady Shropshire's scream, to find himself in the presence of the ladies, in the drawing-room at Pennicocosheetag.

'Oh, Doctor! Doctor!' said Lady Lloyd reproachfully, 'did I not tell you to be punctual to seven!'

'Ah! ah!' groaned another voice, from a figure which was endeavouring to screen itself behind a table piled with shooting apparatus. It was poor Mrs. Beaumont, who was not strong, and being, like the Doctor, overfatigued with the party in the garden, had lapsed unconsciously into a doze, and now appeared before us without any cap, and with only the preparation for her dinner-dress, consisting in the steel hen-coop, which was intended to support it.

'I shall die, Mary,' she said, quietly but despairingly, to Lady Lloyd, and with as much bitterness of feeling as her natural sweetness of temper could possibly allow. 'I shall die! I shall never recover it! How could you do such a thing! How could you bring us here!'

'Oh, Cordelia!' said Lady Lloyd, 'I thought you would so have enjoyed it. We have so often talked

of such an expedition, if it were possible. You so longed to come, if you could do it without a sea voyage.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Beaumont, 'but not without my cap—not without my cap!'

Sir Lloyd now came up to Lady Lloyd, and spoke earnestly to her aside, in words the purport of which I could easily guess. He made it his request that she would immediately wish us all back again at Brooklyn, though this involved the forfeiture of the pills.

'I have left,' he said, 'letters on my table, which it is of the utmost importance should go by this post.'

'And I,' said Mr. Heathorn, 'have to preside at the Geological Society to-morrow, and must be in London.'

'And I,' I whispered to Lady Lloyd, 'have no dressing things with me.'

'And I,' said Miss Rosa, 'have no other gown.'

'And what is to become of me?' said the Baroness, who had apparently been seized on by the Fairy's attendant, in her phaeton, as she was driving, for she had a long whip in her hand. 'What is to become of me?'

'Is anyone coming to dinner?' said the Marchioness, more quietly.

'Oh yes,' said Lady Lloyd, 'that is why I brought you all here to-day. It is one of my brothers' days—

their public days. They always have a public day for the neighbourhood once a month. We shall meet a large party—some of the first people in the country.'

'Alas! alas!' groaned the Doctor, who now, unable any longer to contain himself, emerged in dressing-gown and slippers from behind the screen.

'I thought,' said Lady Lloyd, with a voice slightly faltering, 'I should have given you all such pleasure. Everything is so new, and unlike anything in England.'

'Do your brothers know we are coming?' asked Sir Lloyd.

'Oh no,' she said, 'that would have destroyed half the charm. It will be such an agreeable surprise to them. Emma, my love, ring the bell, and ask at what o'clock dinner is ordered; and when your brothers will be back. I suppose they are out riding.'

The bell was rung, but there was no answer. It was rung again more decidedly, but sounded with a hollow kind of echo, as in an empty house. Lady Lloyd glided out of the room, evidently uneasy in her mind. It was some time before she came back. And for myself, as all our hopes of a return depended upon her, I was highly nervous, lest in some mysterious way she had disappeared. For it was possible that the same benevolent Fairy might have given a pill to some one in her neighbourhood besides ourselves;

and that other person might have concocted a plan of happiness, which involved the sudden transportation of Lady Lloyd to some distant part of the globe; and what then was to become of us? Happily, I was at last relieved by her reappearance, but it was with an expression of countenance which filled me with no little alarm.

'I cannot help fearing,' she said in a low voice to Sir Lloyd, 'I cannot help fearing we have made a mistake.' (It was interesting to see how naturally the 'we' suggested itself, instead of the 'I.') 'But the party was always on this day before. It was a regular thing—a public day. We rarely sat down less than thirty to dinner, and danced in the evening.'

'Danced!' we all exclaimed; and Mrs. Beaumont put her hand to her head, the Baroness looked down upon her driving attire, and Lady Shropshire hastily took off her gardening gloves.

'Have you seen any of the servants?' asked Sir Lloyd.

'No! they are all out.'

'Are there any preparations for dinner in the kitchen?'

'No,' said Lady Lloyd, 'it does not seem to have been used for some time. There is no fire, and all the kitchen utensils are cleared away.'

'Really!' I exclaimed in dismay. I 'am extremely hungry.'

'And so am I,' said Mr. Heathorn; 'for the dancing by the pond was very pretty. And I have no doubt the tea, and cake, and bread and butter for the old ladies and the children were excellent, but I made a very poor luncheon of it.'

Just then two persons—tall gentlemanly young men, though in rough sportsmanlike attire—passed under the windows with their guns.

'There they are!' exclaimed Emma.

'My dear boys!' cried Mrs. Aberleigh. 'Emma, Mary, Sir Lloyd, do not go out. Come with me and hide yourselves in the next room. It will be such a charming surprise to them.' And she drew Lady Lloyd, and Sir Lloyd, and Emma to her side, opened a door into an adjoining room, and hid them all behind the curtain; so that when the two gentlemen entered the drawing-room they found themselves in the middle of a group of entire strangers, in very varied and extraordinary attire, but of whose persons, business, and character they were entirely ignorant. They bowed, and, with no little surprise, ventured to enquire whom they had the pleasure of addressing.

'Gentlemen,' replied Lady Shropshire, 'we are a party of mad people. I am Lady Shropshire, and I am mad. This is my niece, the Baroness Sapieka, and she is mad. This is the learned Mr. Heathorn, President of I know not how many philosophical

societies, and he is mad. The lady on his arm is Mrs. Heathorn, and she is mad also. Mrs. Beaumont, a great friend of mine, is, as you readily perceive, not quite sane. And I need not trouble you with information as to the state of that venerable old gentleman in his dressing-gown and slippers. You, gentlemen, I presume, are the keepers of this Asylum.'

'Not exactly, madam, not exactly,' bowed the gentlemen, with an expression of prodigious astonishment, 'though we must confess that at the present moment appearances are against us.'

'The fact is,' I said, stepping forward—'if you will allow me to explain what naturally causes you some surprise—the fact is, that one of our party this morning took a little pill.'

'What!' exclaimed the gentlemen, with a face of still greater surprise.

But my explanation was interrupted by Mr. Heathorn, who begged to inform them that he was no party to the intrusion, that he had protested and warned us from the first against having anything to do with the Fairy.

'I beg your pardon,' interrupted the gentlemen. 'May I ask where you came from?'

'From England,' we all said; 'from England.'

'And by what packet?'

'We did not come,' I replied, 'by any packet.'

'By a man-of-war?' enquired the gentlemen.

'No,' I said, 'it was not by a man-of-war. In fact, I do not know exactly how we came.'

And both the gentlemen looked earnestly at us all, and then at each other, and then drew back cautiously several paces towards the door, which they had left open behind them, evidently wishing to secure a retreat in case we should be seized with a sudden paroxysm, and fall upon them.

'Will you be kind enough to tell us,' said one of them, 'when you left England?'

I looked at my watch, and answered, 'It must have been at least ten minutes ago.'

'You mean of course ten days?—a very short passage.'

'No,' I said, 'ten minutes.'

'I was in my own conservatory,' said Lady Shropshire 'at seven; for I heard the stable clock strike just as I had watered the last plant.'

'And I was driving through the village at seven,' said the Baroness; 'for I looked up at the church tower just before I found myself here in this abominable place.'

'Are your clocks,' I said, 'fast or slow? We are, I believe, in Canada?'

'You are,' said the gentlemen, seemingly relieved by finding some slight trace of a lucid interval.

But now the old Doctor, who, to support himself in the absence of his stick and umbrella, had taken up

a poker, came forward with a most rueful face and wild appearance, and lifting up the poker, in what seemed rather a menacing gesture, he exclaimed, 'It is all that abominable Fairy! It is the Fairy—the wicked Fairy!' And as he spoke he advanced still closer to the two gentlemen, and seemed meditating, in his indignation, to deal them a deadly blow; when they, casting one more look of amazement round them, precipitately made their retreat, closed the door behind them, and, to our still greater consternation, locked us in.

Mr. Heathorn followed them; but only in time to knock at the door, and entreat them to open it, and allow him to explain matters.

'It was the pill,' he assured them, 'nothing but the pill.' But he heard their steps retreating, and hammered still more loudly.

'If they are violent,' we heard one of them say —'if they are violent, we must send to the Police Station. But I think the keepers are enough. I will go off at once to the Asylum. It is evident they have escaped.'

'Poor things!' said the other. 'And yet some of them seemed quiet enough!'

We sat looking at each other with dismay. Lady Shropshire beat a tattoo with her scissors on the arm of the sofa. The Baroness looked daggers at us all. And I thought it best to summon Lady Lloyd and the others from their hiding-place.

'Lady Lloyd,' said Lady Shropshire calmly, 'we are all going to be put into a madhouse. And it appears to me that we are indebted to you for it, though in what way exactly, I confess I do not perfectly understand.'

'Oh no, no!' cried Lady Lloyd, 'my brothers are only laughing.'

'But they have locked us in!' exclaimed Mr. Heathorn.

'They have gone away!' cried Mrs. Heathorn.

'They have gone for strait-jackets!' groaned Mrs. Beaumont.

'To the Asylum!' supplemented the Doctor.

'What are we to do?' we all repeated.

'My dear Mary,' said Sir Lloyd, evidently cruelly annoyed, but preserving his usual gentleness and equanimity, 'it is clear that you have but one course to take, and that is, to wish us all back again at Brooklyn, without a moment's delay.'

'But I cannot,' she said, 'I cannot. It is perfectly impossible. I have not seen my brothers for six years, or Pennicocosheetag, and all the improvements, and all the families about here. I may never see them again, if I do not take advantage of this opportunity. And George is going to be married, and I must make acquaintance with my intended sister-in-law; and besides, there is such a lovely view, which I so long that you should all see.' But this last suggestion seemed to pour oil on the fire.

All in different accents of disgust exclaimed, 'A view! Are we brought to this horrible place to see a view?'

'My dear Mary!' said Sir Lloyd, 'a beautiful view is a charming thing, but we shall not be able to see it in the Asylum, where doubtless the windows are barred, and look only into the yard. And if we remain here we must be put there; for we must tell the truth, and there is not a jury in the world who would pronounce us sane after we have told the story. And will you also think of my letters?'

'And of the Duke and Duchess?' said Lady Shropshire.

'Look at my riding-dress!' cried the Baroness; 'and a large party coming!'

'Think of me!' groaned the Doctor; and he permitted a pair of very obsolete worsted slippers to protrude from the rather scanty folds of the dressing-gown in which he was shivering.

'And of me!' faintly implored Mrs. Beaumont, still vainly endeavouring to screen herself behind the table. 'A large party! and they may be here directly.'

Lady Lloyd looked round with pity and vexation. But she caught an imploring look of an opposite character from her mother and sister to remain firm.

'You know,' she said to Sir Lloyd, 'of course, I will do anything you desire. But I really cannot bring

myself in my own heart to wish ourselves back, till we have seen my brothers; and especially as the scenery is so fine round that point on the lake. I had intended to take you all to-morrow morning an enchanting drive—it is the most lovely thing in Canada. And we could get to England in time for dinner. And my brothers!' she continued; 'to go back without seeing them, or their seeing my mother and Emma! I cannot indeed wish it. I am so sorry, so very sorry you do not like it. I thought it would have been such a treat for us all.' And the tears came into her eyes. 'Do let us stay here!' she added imploringly to Lady Shropshire, 'only till to-morrow morning.'

But Lady Shropshire said not a word. She only looked what it was infinitely better for the peace of the party that she should not express.

'My dear Mary,' said Sir Lloyd, 'I quite understand your feelings. And I will not pain you by suggesting, that, contemplating, as you did, our sleeping in Canada, it would have been highly desirable, if you had ordered the Fairies to bring, not only ourselves, but our dressing things, and our morning clothes for to-morrow.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd—this truth for the first time flashing upon her—'I ought to have done that, but I quite forgot it; and yet I tried to think over everything.'

'Yes,' I said, 'our memory, like many other things

belonging to us, is rather defective; and this is one reason why, perhaps, it is better that the world in general should not be trusted with pills; or at least only those who know how to use them as judiciously as Lady Lloyd.'

I said this, for I could not resist giving her a little stab. Half the enjoyment one feels in the misfortunes of one's friends is the opportunity of saying something bitter to them.

Lady Lloyd, however, did not retort; she was far too amiable.

Sir Lloyd continued: 'You must indeed comply with our united wish, and wish us back at Brooklyn without a moment's delay.'

'But I cannot,' she said, 'I cannot. I will do anything you like—write anything—say anything. But I cannot wish what I do not wish. It may be inconvenient to Lady Shropshire and the rest about their dress. But no one stands on ceremony here. It is not like England.'

'But try, my love,' said Sir Lloyd, 'try to wish us back.'

'Only try,' I said. 'Say the words—repeat after me, "I wish we were all safe back at Brooklyn, and had never come to Pennicocosheetag."'

'I will say the words,' said Lady Lloyd reluctantly; 'but I know they will be of no use. Words are not wishes.'

'But let us try,' I said, rejoiced at having so far succeeded in my petition. 'Now,' and I turned to the rest of the party, 'are you all ready? Sit firm—hold fast—shut your eyes—don't be alarmed—and we shall all be back at home in a minute. Pray,' I said to Lady Lloyd, 'repeat after me, loudly and distinctly, that the Fairy's people may hear and not make any mistake.'

'Do the Fairies in Canada,' I asked of Mrs. Aberleigh, 'speak French or English? Which language had we better use?'

'English, I should think, certainly,' said Mrs. Aberleigh.

And I have sometimes had a suspicion that, as her own wishes decidedly concurred with her daughter's, she gave us the wrong advice, and that if we had employed French we might have been more successful. However, I never had the opportunity of ascertaining if my suspicion was just. And indeed Mrs. Aberleigh was a woman of such sterling honesty, that I have often reproached myself for allowing the doubt to cross my mind.

'Had we better stand up or sit down,' I said to Lady Lloyd, 'as we repeat the words?'

'Well,' she said, 'I think it will be safer to sit on the sofa, in case we should go. I wonder whether we go through the keyhole, or up the chimney?'

'I am sure,' I replied, 'I have not a notion.'

'Won't it blacken my dress,' said Rosa, 'if we go up

the chimney?' and she gathered her white silk about her.

'Up the chimney!' shrieked the Baroness.

'Hush! hush!' I said, 'for we have not a moment to lose. Sit fast. Now, Lady Lloyd, repeat after me.'

'I wish'—'I wish,' said Lady Lloyd—'that we were all'—'that we were all,' said Lady Lloyd—'safe back at home'—'safe back at home,' said Lady Lloyd—'and that we never'—'and that we never,' said Lady Lloyd—'had come to Pennicocosheetag'—'had come to Pennicocosheetag,' said Lady Lloyd. And I closed my eyes, that I might not become giddy, as we went through the air; and opened them again, I will scarcely say expecting, but hoping and longing, to find myself safe in the drawing-room at Brooklyn. But, to my consternation, we were all of us, as we were before, in the drawing-room at Pennicocosheetag. There was the lake, there were the islands, there was the pine forest, with the point where the beautiful view was to be seen. And there also was Lady Shropshire, grasping with hands outstretched the arms of the sofa, in case of a jolt during the journey; there was the Baroness, with her hands clasped tight upon the handle of her whip; there was Mrs. Heathorn, clinging affectionately, but in terror, to Mr. Heathorn, who persisted boldly and philosophically in remaining upon his legs; and there was the poor old Doctor, who had gathered himself up into his dressing-gown,

as sensible people collect their limbs into the smallest possible compass when a carriage is on the point of overturning. Emma and Mrs. Beaumont had drawn close to each other, and had sunk upon their knees before the table, and covered their faces with their hands, that they might not see what was done with them. And Mrs. Aberleigh also had seized a cushion and umbrella, which she thought might be useful to break the fall, in case she were dropped by the way, or there should be any rain. Whilst Rosa had wrapped a green tablecloth over her white silk, to protect it as she passed up the chimney. Alas! all these precautions were unneeded. No change had taken place in our position. The wish had failed in its power. The wicked Fairy had cajoled us over to Canada, and there abandoned us to our fate; or else (a lingering hope clung to me) something was defective in our operation. I did not wholly lose my presence of mind, but thought there might still be one chance. And I proposed to Lady Lloyd, that, as uttering the words had produced no effect, she should write them down, when perhaps the charm might be more potent. Accordingly, she consented, and, after my dictation, wrote down the same words in large letters on a sheet of paper.

'And pray,' I said, 'write plain, and take care how you spell Pennicocosheetag, which I understand is an Indian name, signifying the Wampum of Peace, and

the Tomahawk of War. And, by-the-bye,' I added, 'I do think it might be as well to write it in French, as well as in English, in case the Canadian Fairies understand only French.'

And so the words were written, and the sheet of paper laid open on the table. But, alas! all in vain. There was not the slightest symptom of locomotion, except a loud creak and crack of a rather antique and worm-eaten arm-chair, into which the Doctor had thrown himself, and which creak made us all jump and start up. We sat and looked at each other in dumb despair.

'I knew it,' said Lady Lloyd, sobbing, though with rather complicated and balanced feelings of regret and satisfaction, 'I knew that I must really wish; and that it is no use merely to say or write the words. And I cannot wish it—that is the simple truth. When I have seen my brothers and my sister-in-law that is to be, and my old nurse, and everybody, and shown you the view, then I shall really wish to go back. But I will ask you all to put yourselves in my position, who have not seen my brothers for six years, and may never see them again. And my mother too, and Emma, they must stay. And Sir Lloyd has never seen the house where I was born. I cannot, indeed, I cannot wish it!'

And it was impossible to dispute that the feeling was natural and even reasonable. Still I tried to think if anything had been omitted or neglected in our operation.

'Oh!' I cried, 'we ought to have written upon gilt-edged paper. The Fairy, remember, always required that we should write upon gilt-edged paper. It is more respectful. I wonder if there is any in the house.'

'No,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'I think I can answer that question, none in Canada. They do not use it here.'

And so this last hope failed.

'No,' said Lady Lloyd, 'you must indeed be content here this evening. To-morrow morning I shall take another pill, and bring you all back home in time for dinner.'

At the mention of another pill I could not refrain from a suppressed sigh, in which both Mr. Heathorn and Sir Lloyd joined. But it was evident we had no alternative. We had been drawn in within the eddies of the Fairy's benevolence, and could no longer extricate ourselves from the whirlpool. I comforted myself with the hope that, when it was discovered who we were, we might escape being consigned to the Asylum, might possibly derive some amusement and information from witnessing Canadian hospitality, might pass a comfortable night, see the view the next morning, and then trust to another pill to rectify any evil consequences, especially by blotting out all memory of our unfortunate journey. We sat some little time gazing on each other, not with the most sympathising feelings (people who have done foolish

things in company, do not sympathise in company when the penalty comes), when we heard footsteps and voices approaching the door.

'Who'll go in first?'

'You go in first.'

'Where are the policemen? Have you got the handcuffs? and the strait-jackets? Are your pistols ready?'

'Oh, they won't be dangerous! they are mostly women.'

'Be they gentlefolks?'

'Yes, I think so; but they are very wild in their talk.'

'Which is the violent one?'

'The old man,' replied a voice, which we recognised as that of one of our hosts; 'the old man in the dressing-gown and slippers.'

'Now, are you all ready? Unlock the door.'

And we heard the lock undone, saw the door open; and two decent, but sturdy and determined men appeared, accompanied by Mr. Aberleigh and his brother.

'Now, ladies and gentlemen,' they said, 'we hope you'll be quite quiet. We don't mean to hurt you in the least. But you will come quietly along with us, and don't be afraid.' One of them advanced to the Baroness, and offered her his arm.

'Man!' she shrieked out, 'if you touch me I shall

die! Do you know who I am? I am the Baroness Sapieka.'

'Oh yes, my lady, we know that very well, and you shall be treated like a Baroness where you are going, if you come peaceably with me.'

'Now, sir,' said the other, addressing the poor Doctor, 'I'm sure you won't be taking hold of that poker again. It won't be of the slightest use. If you will just let me put your hands through these nice things, they'll feel quite comfortable, and you will be much better off in a quiet room by yourself, than with only your dressing-gown and slippers, before all these gentlefolks.'

The poor Doctor looked horror-stricken, but never dreamed of resistance. Only when his hands were fairly fastened in the handcuffs, he looked up plaintively to poor Lady Lloyd.

But at this moment we heard a loud exclamation of astonishment, 'You, Mary! you, Sir Lloyd! my dear mother! and Emma too! How did you come here? Why did you not tell us? Why did you not write?'

'We will tell you all about it presently,' said Lady Lloyd, who had thrown herself into one brother's arms, while Mrs. Aberleigh and Emma had appropriated the other. 'Only do go and send those horrible men away. It is Lady Shropshire I have brought with us, and the Baroness, whom you have

so often heard me mention in my letters as such delightful people ; and Mr. and Mrs. Heathorn.'

'But how did you come here?' said Mr. George Aberleigh? 'When did you leave England?'

'I entreat you, I entreat you not to say!' I exclaimed, 'or we shall all be in handcuffs, and the Asylum, before another ten minutes : you shall hear all, gentlemen,' I continued, addressing Mr. Aberleigh, 'when we are by ourselves. But pray go to the assistance of the poor ladies, who are frightened out of their senses.'

I spoke so calmly, and Lady Lloyd, and Mrs. Aberleigh, and Emma, and Sir Lloyd seemed so tranquil and cheerful and self-possessed, that, although there still seemed to hang about the two brothers some alarming reminiscences of the pill and the Fairy, and of our declaration that ten minutes before we had all been on the other side of the Atlantic, yet, after a little private communication, they dismissed the officials, and sat down to listen calmly to Lady Lloyd's story. What shades of expression passed over their faces I need not attempt to describe. They asked permission for Dr. Burt—whom they had brought with them from the Asylum, and left in the adjoining room—to feel our pulses. And Dr. Burt, after handling our wrists for a sufficient time, to give us the idea that he was really making himself acquainted with our case, pronounced authoritatively and gravely that, although

the diagnosis exhibited symptomatic oscillations of febricitative irritability of the organs, yet the administration of a slight refrigerative prophylactic, would doubtless superinduce soporific conglomeration, and restore the cerebral functions to their normal catalepticism, especially as the epidermis exhibited traces of humefaction, and the palatal and lingual cartilages were denuded of any alarming offuscation. This decision, which we inferred to be satisfactory, from the faces both of the doctor and the gentlemen—for the doctor, like many other doctors, evidently spoke in the Cherokee or Red Indian language, which we did not understand—much relieved our minds; and as our testimony to the facts which we narrated was perfectly consistent, and supported by our concurrent voices; as we spoke seriously, and even solemnly; permitted ourselves to be examined separately, and, in fact, exhibited every guarantee and confirmation of honest testimony which it was possible to require; and as the young gentlemen had not been educated in Germany;—they permitted their inner consciousness to be overruled by testimony, accepted our statements as truths, and not as allegories or myths, and we then turned our attention to the sublunary, but very pressing, exigencies of our immediate position.

'I fixed on this day,' said Lady Lloyd, 'because I wished to give you the charm of an agreeable surprise,

when I was certain it could not be inconvenient to you, this being one of your public days. But is not dinner very late? I am afraid you are becoming too fashionable.'

'There is a mistake!' exclaimed Mr. Aberleigh. 'Did you not receive our letters? Oh no!' he reminded himself—'of course you could not. But our public days are all suspended for the present. In the unsettled and alarming state of things in America, we may at any moment be exposed to a raid; and we have therefore sent away all our servants, furniture, and valuables. And Charles and I get something to eat at the little public-house. We sleep here, but that is all; the house is perfectly dismantled.'

I looked round, and saw the hungry faces whiten with dismay.

'What a relief! There is no party!' exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont.

'One comfort!' groaned the Baroness, 'I shall not be bored with dressing.'

'But, my dear George,' said Lady Lloyd, 'you can give us something to eat, can you not? We have had no dinner, and scarcely any luncheon.'

'I really,' he said, 'am saying the strict literal truth, when I tell you there is nothing eatable in the house, but this,' and he took a crust of bread out of his pocket. 'Oh yes, there is a young bear, which we shot as we came along. You can have

some steaks. I will skin it and dress it as soon as possible.'

'A young bear!' exclaimed the Baroness.

'Can we have some tea?' asked Lady Shropshire, with a voice of calm despair.

'I fear not,' said Mr. Aberleigh; 'we have dismantled the house. There is not a kettle or a teapot, much less any tea in it.'

'Can we go to bed?' asked Lady Shropshire.

'I am shocked, I am distressed beyond measure,' said Mr. Aberleigh, 'but there is not a bed in the house, except two shakedowns, which my brother and I use.'

'Cannot some of the neighbouring families,' I asked, 'take compassion upon us?'

'The families quite close to us,' said Mr. Aberleigh, 'have all departed, and taken everything with them. Only some poor people, unable to move, are still in their cabins. But I will send the keepers to the Asylum, which is only a mile off, to procure some tea and bread and butter, unless you would like to go there yourselves.'

'Not for a million of money!' said Lady Shropshire.

'We had better not,' said Mr. Heathorn, thoughtfully but decidedly, as usual. 'For I really do not see how the managers of the Asylum, if they once found us within it, could ever justify themselves in letting us go out of it.'

'There is some brandy in my shooting-flask,' said Mr. Aberleigh. 'Would you like some brandy and water?'

The ladies exclaimed with horror at the proposal of such an unutterable abomination; but the gentlemen seemed to think that in default of anything else, it might be tolerated.

'I am perishing with cold,' said Lady Shropshire.

'We can light a fire immediately,' said Mr. Aberleigh, 'if the gentlemen will come and help us to cut down some branches of a tree.'

Lady Shropshire cast her eyes up to the ceiling, but said nothing.

'Here are some bear-skins,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, coming to the relief of her sons, who were cruelly distressed by the condition of their guests, and the impossibility of offering them any hospitality. 'Lady Shropshire, let me wrap one round you.'

And accordingly the ladies and the Doctor, and indeed all of us, availed ourselves of a heap of bear-skins which lay in a corner; and though they had not been perfectly dressed, and diffused an odour which rendered it necessary for the ladies to keep their handkerchiefs to their faces, yet they warmed us, and we sat each of us apart in our chair or sofa, like Ulysses and his companions in the seal-skins, with the furs closely muffled up about our legs, and without speaking. Lady Lloyd buried her face in her hands.

The consideration of the pleasure she had expected herself, of the grief it would be to her mother and sister to have such a provokingly transient glimpse of those so dear to them; and the possibility that they might never meet again, especially with the prospect of danger from the American raid; evidently caused a great struggle in her mind, when set against a very natural desire to wish us all home again. But the reflection that the trial was only for a few hours, and that the next morning another pill would put all things right, ultimately triumphed over any other feeling. It was clear to her on which side lay the balance of the happiness of the world, and all hope of a return that evening was finally cut off. I perceived it by the sad but decisive air with which she rose from her seat and went to the window, taking a sidelong look of compassion upon us, as a conscientious judge gazes on the criminal whom he is compelled to condemn.

Our young hosts cheered us up. They despatched the keepers to the Asylum, and to the neighbouring cabins, to procure us some provisions and accommodation for the night. Huge logs of wood made a blazing fire, which soon threw a cheerful glow upon the strange apartment. The bear-skins, odorous as they were, yet warmed us thoroughly. Tea, and bread and butter, and eggs, and cold meat, and rashers of ham, and brandy and water for the gentlemen, soon appeared. And as we gathered round the fire, after par-

taking of a hearty though rude meal, and looked in each other's faces, we all burst into a laugh. It was late, but our hours generally were late. There was nothing very tempting in the accommodation offered us for the night. And so we prolonged our conversation, thinking little of the lapse of time. It was pleasant to see Lady Lloyd sitting between her brothers, with a hand in the hand of each; and Mrs. Aberleigh, always too sensible to mind the roughnesses of life, gazing with pride and pleasure on the fine, manly, gentlemanly forms and faces of her sons; whilst Emma was busily occupied in wandering round the room with Rosa, and renewing her acquaintance with the stuffed friends of her childhood in the glass cases. Sir Lloyd, who had travelled much, and was a most agreeable companion, amused Lady Shropshire by giving her an account of his excursions in Norway, for the purpose of shooting birds, for his collection in ornithology; and Mrs. Beaumont had inveigled the Doctor into a discussion upon Plato. Even the Baroness, who when inclined could be very fascinating, listened with apparent pleasure to some scientific experiments of Mr. Heathorn, in which Mrs. Heathorn also was deeply interested. I could not help congratulating myself on the better aspect of things, and at least on the good temper, and kind feeling, and patient acquiescence in the inevitable, which now seemed to pervade the whole party. But it was growing late—

how late I did not know; for it is one of my foibles to dislike having a watch, which I am sure to lose and never trust to; and I thought it necessary to recall the conversation to our own immediate state and prospects, preparatory to our separating for the night, or, as I should have said, had I known the real state of the hour, for the morning.

'Well,' I said, 'ludicrous as our position is, it might be worse; and, happily, though we shall be sorry to part from our kind hosts, we shall not have to burden them much longer with our company in their present unprepared state. Lady Lloyd will take a pill in the morning. But if she will wish our dressing things to be here in time, and a good breakfast, and luncheon, there is no reason why we should not stay and see this wonderful view; and Lady Lloyd, and Sir Lloyd, and Mrs. Aberleigh, and Emma will have time to pay their visits to any neighbours who may be within reach. And,' I added, turning to Lady Shropshire and the Baroness, 'it is really a pity, now that you are in Canada, to return without seeing the finest thing in it. You can get back to Woodleigh in time for dinner. The journey will not take us a minute, judging from the rapidity with which we arrived here.'

'And can I have my maid and my dressing things in the morning?' sighed the Baroness, fatigued with the very idea of the bore of dressing.

'Certainly,' said Lady Lloyd. 'They will be here at half-past six, or at all events only a few minutes later. It shall be my first wish. What shall you want?'

'Would it not,' I said, 'be a good thing if Lady Lloyd would kindly sit down to the table, where fortunately there are pens and ink, and make out a list for the Fairies of all the things that we shall each require?'

'And you promise,' said Lady Shropshire, 'that we shall be back by four. Remember I have a dinner-party. Unless indeed, as is most probable, people hear of our being all lost, and the whole county is in a hue and cry after us, which I suspect will be the case.'

'I will prevent that,' said Lady Lloyd. 'I shall wish most heartily that all this unfortunate business may be forgotten, and no trace of it then will remain anywhere.'

Lady Shropshire here looked at her with silent incredulous amazement. She had not, like ourselves, had experience of the Lethe wish.

Lady Lloyd seated herself at the table, and took up a sheet of foolscap paper.

'My dear Lady Shropshire, what shall you want?'

'Oh! only my morning dressing things. Rosa will, I am sure, be my maid, and help me. The less one has when one travels the better.'

'And what does the Baroness want?'

'How can I tell?' cried the Baroness. 'I never know what I want or what I shall put on till the time comes. Florinda does everything for me. I must have all my things.'

'All!' I said. 'Pray remember that the Fairies take our words literally. Words with them have a fixed meaning. They have no power of charitable interpretation, no non-natural sense in their language, as we have in England. You do not want your diamonds, do you?'

'Really,' said the Baroness, 'I cannot take the trouble to say what I may want or what I may not. Put down all my things, and then I can decide when I see them.'

'Maria,' said Lady Lloyd to Mrs. Heathorn, 'what will Mr. Heathorn and yourself want?'

Mrs. Heathorn, after a little communication with Mr. Heathorn, wrote down a short list. The poor Doctor found himself much in fault, and was sadly perplexed to decide whether he should have his white-handled razors or the black ones; and also with the difficulty of naming to Lady Lloyd those articles of dress in which he was clearly, at the present moment, most deficient. But he had got as far as his shoes and hair-brush, when I ventured to say to Lady Lloyd—

'Of course you have the phial of pills with you?'

'Oh yes!' she said. 'I took care to take it out of

my jewel-case just before we started. Here it is; I have it in my reticule.'

And she opened the reticule, and felt for the phial.

I watched with some alarm a slight delay before the phial was produced. Lady Lloyd's face changed colour.

'I'm sure,' she said—and her voice faltered—'I put it in my reticule. Has anyone taken it out? It must be here.'

We all started up, and gathered anxiously round the table. The reticule was emptied of its contents—shaken—turned inside out—handkerchief, gloves, smelling-bottle, purse, inspected—every corner ransacked. Not a sign of the phial was to be found.

'I am sure,' said Lady Lloyd, fairly overcome by this last stroke of fortune, 'I put it into my reticule. I could not have dropped it in the road. Is it under the table? I am sure some one has taken it for fun.'

'It is no fun,' I said. 'It is death to us. What is to become of us?'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd—and as I heard the word, I seized fast hold of the arms of a chair, into which I had sunk down, knowing that no longer was there any unreality in the words, that the wish came from the heart, and expecting it therefore to be realised by our immediate transportation to England—

'Oh that we were safe back at Brooklyn! and that we had never come to Pennicocosheetag!'

I closed my eyes, held my breath, resolved not to be giddy, but there was no sound, no motion, no current of air, no rushing—nothing which gave the slightest indication of a movement. I opened my eyes with some alarm, lest I should find myself in the clouds, and do anything which would cause me to drop. But no! I was still in the arm-chair, still in the drawing-room at Pennicocosheetag, still surrounded by the lengthened visages of our friends, still opposite to Lady Lloyd, who had sunk with her face on the table, and had burst into tears.

'Did you,' I said, 'really and truly wish us back?'

'Oh yes, yes!' she cried. 'How I wish I had never been so foolish, so silly as to come here!'

'And nothing has come of your wish,' I said. 'Here we are still. This is the worst point of all.'

And we sat looking at each other in stupefaction.

'What o'clock is it?' I asked. 'Who has a watch?'

Several watches were produced. It was ten minutes past twelve.

'Ah!' I said, and sunk back in the chair in dismay, 'I see how it is; the four-and-twenty hours are past. The Fairies are all gone to bed. They do not sit up through the night. It is too late to unwish the wish. Why! oh why!' I said angrily to the rest, 'did

you not look at your watches, and warn me that it was so late?'

'Why did you not look at your own?' was the still more angry retort.

'I had not one,' I said, indignantly.

'You ought to have had one,' was the bitter answer.

And I know not to what extremities of recrimination we might have proceeded, but Sir Lloyd interposed.

'Mary, my dear,' he said—and kissed Lady Lloyd's forehead—'it is of no use to cry. We are indeed in a very awkward predicament. But you never intended to bring us into it.'

'No, that I did not,' sobbed Lady Lloyd. 'I thought it would have been a delightful surprise.'

'Surprises,' I said, 'are sometimes dangerous'—and I was proceeding to run a pin or two into Lady Lloyd's conscience, by way of comfort to us all, and especially to myself; but Sir Lloyd happily prevented me.

'Our only plan evidently is,' he said, 'to think how we can get back to England as soon as possible; at any rate, how we can let them know in England that we are here. Where is the nearest telegraph office?'

'I will despatch a letter to Montreal at once,' said Mr. Aberleigh. 'A friend of mine there will telegraph to Brooklyn that you are all safe.'

'But how are we to get back?' groaned Lady Shropshire, at last fairly vanquished in her equanimity.

'I won't go back by sea,' cried the Baroness. 'I hate the sea. I shall die on board a ship. Oh, Lady Lloyd, I will never forgive you! How could you bring us to this odious place? this Penny what d'ye call it?'

Lady Lloyd relapsed into tears. And then, after reflection, she exclaimed again—

'Dear me! dear me! now I recollect—how provoking, how careless of me! I must have left the phial of pills on the dressing-table. Yes, I remember, I took it out of my jewel-case the last thing, intending to put it carefully into my reticule. And Mrs. Alsop came to take some orders, and while I was standing speaking to her, the clock struck half-past six, and I was carried off without knowing it. It must be on my dressing-table.'

'Well,' I said, 'one ray of hope is at least open to us. We must telegraph immediately to Annette, Lady Lloyd's maid. Let her take a pill the first thing in the morning after the message reaches her, and wish us all back.'

'Yes,' said Sir Lloyd, 'if the phial is really there.'

'And yes,' said Mr. Heathorn, 'if Annette can be induced really to wish us back. Sometimes, when the cat is away, the mice begin to play. And

Annette may be no more able to command her wishes and her feelings than Lady Lloyd herself.'

'Tell her,' said Sir Lloyd, 'that her wages shall be raised if we return safely.'

'Tell her,' cried the Doctor, 'I will give her a couple of sovereigns.'

'Tell her,' said Rosa, 'she shall have my black lace veil.'

'I think,' said Lady Lloyd, 'I know what will ensure a hearty wish. She shall have my pink slip, and marry Farmer Barton at the Farm.'

'Well,' I said, 'whatever you think most persuasive. Conjure her to wish us back, wish heartily; or what will become of us I cannot imagine.'

'It will be a long telegram,' said Lady Lloyd.

'Yes,' I said, 'and a very odd one. And I should like to hear the remarks on it made by the clerks at the telegraph offices. But let us write it down. And pray,' I said to Lady Lloyd, 'write distinctly. Cross your t's and dot the i's, and do not put Pennicocosheetag into it, for they would turn it into I know not what.'

'To Annette, Lady Lloyd's maid, Brooklyn, Rayadil, Wales. All safe in Canada. On receipt of this, look for small phial with globules on Lady Lloyd's dressing-table.'

'Pills,' I interposed, 'not globules. Say pills at once.'

So the word was corrected.

'Dissolve one in four gallons of spring water at half-past six next morning. Sip three table-spoonfuls, pour the remainder on the green turf. Write down on gilt letter paper (some in the drawer) that you wish us all back. Wish heartily, put the paper under the old oak, and do not say a word to any human being. You shall have my pink silk, and something else—you know what—if we get back.'

The message was examined, read over and over again, pronounced clear and explicit, and despatched; and we prepared for our repose. What arrangements exactly had been contrived for the night, I never enquired. I only know that shakedowns were made up for the ladies; and that the gentlemen sat up in their chairs, or lay down on the sofas, and on the floor, round the fire in the drawing-room. And you can imagine the faces of discomfort and distress with which we saluted each other the next morning; when, however, Mr. Aberleigh contrived, by begging in the neighbourhood, to procure a better and more substantial breakfast than we had calculated upon.

'And now,' said Lady Lloyd, as we rose from table, 'we may be called away at a moment's notice. Do let us go and look at the beautiful view which I am so anxious you should see!'

'But I am dying with fatigue!' exclaimed the

Baroness. 'I have not closed my eyes all night long.'

'Go out!' said Lady Shropshire, in flat and blank despair. 'Look at my gloves. Look at my nose. I have been bitten to death by mosquitoes.'

'It is impossible,' said the gentlemen, glancing at their shoes and their evening dress.

'It can't be thought of,' groaned Mrs. Heathorn and Rosa, whose silks and satins and flowers ill-assorted with their woful and haggard faces.

'Go out!' actually screamed Mrs. Beaumont, still employing a large bear-skin to shroud the scaffolding of her gown, where gown there was none.

But Mrs. Aberleigh and Emma persisted in their intention of paying their visit to the few persons who remained in the neighbourhood—promising, however, not to betray the secret of their transit from Europe; and they dismantled themselves of their grand toilette, and borrowed shawls and bonnets of some old women, who had come to assist and condole; and I persuaded Mr. Heathorn and Mrs. Heathorn, at last, to make an effort to please Lady Lloyd, provided Mr. Aberleigh could supply us with shoes and hats. This was happily accomplished. Sir Lloyd and Lady Lloyd, with Mrs. Aberleigh and Emma, proceeded on their visits; and we—the others—took a path which we were told would lead us to a point near which this wonderful prospect opened, and where Lady Lloyd was to join

us, and take us to the spot, and enjoy our transports as we came upon the view.

After walking for some time through a low scraggy brushwood of pines, over a very rough uncomfortable road, we reached a piece of open ground, with a marsh in front, and the lake beyond, spreading out, in a dreary monotony, among a number of swampy islands, full of pines, which seemed endless in number, and infinite in uninterestingness—if indeed there is such a word. Everything was very large, except the trees; very extensive, very flat, except a low range of dumpy blueish hills at a distance, which I was told afterwards were the Golden Mountains. There was nothing particularly attractive in the spot; but I was tired, and proposed that we should sit down and rest upon a trunk of an old tree, covered with moss and toadstools. And so we fell into conversation, and time slipped by, when we were interrupted by persons approaching, and I heard Lady Lloyd say—

'Oh, there they are! how provoking! How I wish I had been here when they came upon it! I had set my heart upon hearing them scream with delight.'

We rose, and advanced to join them.

'And now,' I said to Lady Lloyd, 'we are quite ready to proceed with you to see this wonderful view. How far off is it?'

'What!' she exclaimed; 'do you want anything

finer than this? Have you been sitting here all the time on the very spot, and not admiring it? Look at the green foreground; look at the expanse of lake; look at those myriads of islands—there are 365 of them—just as many as the days in the year; and there are the Golden Mountains.'

And she looked with wondering expectation to hear our bursts of admiration and enjoyment.

'Well,' I said, 'it is very fair; but I think Windermere is finer, or Lock Katrine, and certainly Killarney.'

'I never saw any of them,' said Lady Lloyd. 'But I am sure I used to think this the most glorious prospect in the world, when I was a child. And all the people in the neighbourhood always said it was the finest view in Canada. Oh how many hours I used to sit here, and enjoy it above all things! But I don't think,' she continued, 'you are in the right place exactly. Come a little more to the left. There—don't you see how like that island in the middle is to an old woman sitting on a tub? The profile is exact, wonderful! I always called it the Witch's Island; and next to it is the Fairy Island, and the next—that one with the tall fir—is the Palace. I gave them all names. Are they not beautiful? And yet,' she sighed, 'I do think some one has changed them. And one cannot see the Golden Mountains, as one used to see them: they don't look half as high. The last time I saw them—

which made me so long to show them to you—it was at sunset; they were all like gold and amber. I never saw anything so exquisite. I am sure something has been done to them. They used to be quite like Alps, and now they don't look as high as the Copley Hills. How provoking! But still there are the islands. No one is ever able to count them—like the stones at Stonehenge. There are really just 365 of them—the same number as the days in the year. And the Indians have all kinds of stories about them.'

Lady Lloyd had been swept back into the days of her childhood.

I listened to her with affectionate interest; partly because I was very fond of her, and also because I was tempted to moralise. And I could have moralised at considerable length. But after looking quietly at the view for some time, during which we all looked also, and endeavoured, as far as we could without the sacrifice of truth, to say that we admired it, she turned to us, and observed again, that certainly it was not so beautiful as it used to be. She was not sure that she should have brought us, if she had known how it had been altered.

'Well,' I said, 'it is something to have learned, especially for the possessor of the pills, that what throws children into ecstasies, is not always so charming to grown-up people; and that things themselves, and the circumstances under which we see them, are very

likely to be changed, even if we are not changed ourselves.'

'Yes,' sighed Lady Lloyd. 'Suppose we go back to the house. But I am very much obliged to you for coming. I so longed to see your ecstasies, and to hear you thank me for bringing you, and own that you should never forget it.'

'My love,' said Sir Lloyd, gently putting his hand upon her shoulder, 'we will all thank you for bringing us; for you did it with the kindest intention, to give us pleasure. And a wish to make others happy is, to me, always a more beautiful prospect than the finest of lakes, and a whole populace of islands, and even than the Golden Mountains.'

'Yes,' I added, 'and we shall never forget it. But let us return; for it is not safe to be separated in such a condition as ours.' And I was obliged, rather cruelly, to bring back our minds, from our painless and even pleasant moralisation, to the anxious realities of our personal prospects.

I will not dwell on the manner in which we passed the remainder of the day, or the many little trials of temper to which we were each exposed; but particularly Lady Lloyd, especially when the Baroness enquired of us how we enjoyed the view. Night arrived at last, and before we separated, I thought it desirable to do, what I am fond of doing, give some advice to the rest of the party on their proceedings. 'We have

sent,' I said, 'our telegram to England. Possibly it may arrive within the twenty-four hours. Possibly it may pass through the telegraph offices without being so travestied as to become wholly unintelligible. Possibly Annette may be faithful. Possibly the prospect of the pink slip, and the further reward hinted at, may triumph over other temptations to desire the prolongation of our absence. Possibly the phial may be on the dressing-table; possibly Annette may find it; possibly she may understand what to do with it; possibly the pills may still be effective, though Annette was never contemplated in our original list; possibly their power may extend to Canada; and so possibly we may be back in England the very first thing to-morrow morning. But let me implore you,' I continued, 'to remember that the Fairies are most punctual, and also most rapid, in their movements. They wait for nothing. We have before us,' and I glanced at Mrs. Beaumont and the Doctor, 'two warnings against being unprepared for them. Mr. Aberleigh has been good enough to supply me with a nightcap. But it is not a becoming article of dress, and I shall myself take good care not to have it on my head at half-past six to-morrow morning. Annette at that moment may have taken the pill. The neighbourhood will have been alarmed for our safety. She will doubtless, notwithstanding our injunctions, perceive that the hope of secrecy in such a message, passing through

I know not how many telegraph offices, is a delusion, and that she may as well enjoy the delight of communicating our secret to the neighbourhood, who may therefore be assembled to receive us. As I said before, I shall myself take care not to be in my nightcap; nor (I glanced again at the Doctor) in my dressing-gown and slippers—if indeed I had any with me. Should there be a procession, perhaps with flags and music, it would be awkward.'

'A procession!' groaned Mrs. Beaumont, drawing more closely round her the folds of her bear-skin.

'Yes,' I said, 'such things have been. Both Sir Lloyd and Lady Lloyd, and the Marchioness, are most popular, and the whole county may be assembled to welcome them back, after the anxiety which must have been caused by their disappearance. Good-night!' I added; 'good-night! Be prepared. The suddenness of the Fairies' movements is indeed a great charm, but it may sometimes involve awkwardnesses.'

They all looked aghast. But the ladies retired, and the gentlemen once more arranged themselves for the night, round the fire in the drawing-room. It was a disturbed and dreary time. I observed that the Doctor had, as before, grasped the arms of his chair firmly with both hands, to secure himself against a jolt; and had also planted his feet firmly against the fender, as we do in a railway carriage, when apprehending a shock. To Mr. Heathorn, as a scientific man, I urged

the importance of our both keeping a careful and minute observation of facts, consulting his chronometer, and being prepared to communicate to the British Association any meteorological, or astronomical, or geographical discoveries which we might make during our transit to England, whether it was properly to be called a voyage or journey. And I suggested also that it would be better to leave the door open, or perhaps to open the windows, before half-past six, that the Fairies might be spared the necessity of squeezing us through the keyhole, or whirling us through the smoke and soot of the chimney, to the spoiling of the ladies' dresses, and with unfavourable results to our own appearance, should the tenants be assembled to welcome our return. And then, at last, having discharged my duty, I felt my conscience cleared, and sunk into a sleep.

How long I slept I know not; but I remember in my sleep, which was rather disturbed, I handed the Baroness to the seat on the old trunk of the tree to see the beautiful view, and showed her the Witch's Island, when the Witch asked me for a pinch of snuff, which I gave her—for she was a tobacconist, of whom I bought my snuff in Cheapside. And so the Lord Mayor came by in his gilt coach, with two men in armour, with plum-puddings on their heads, who were eating turtle soup. And the Lord Chancellor returned thanks for the House of Lords—as he

always does at the Lord Mayor's dinner; and Mrs. Beaumont sat by his side; and then the Archbishop of Canterbury asked her to waltz with him, which she did. Only the Queen came in, and made some remarks upon the want of etiquette in dancing with the Archbishop without a court train, and with only a crinoline. But it was Julius Cæsar, not the Queen. And he asked me, if I had read his life by the Emperor of the French; and I repeated to him some lines of Homer; and in some way I found the Emperor was married to the Fairy Polypragmosyne. And we all went to Canada together, which was in Shropshire; and all the tenants came out to receive the Emperor; and directly afterwards we went up the chimney together, and I sat down in an arm-chair, which was there, and a great bear came, and put its paws up in my lap;—and so I opened my eyes.

It was not a bear, but Juno, the great Newfoundland dog at Brooklyn. And on the pretty terrace at Brooklyn I was standing, while the cold grey hues of the morning were still lying on the old oaks, and the great lime trees, and the meadows, with the river Lug winding through them, and little Norbury Brook brawling and bubbling under the alders, as if we had not been away in Canada, and as if nothing was the matter in the house. Around me were all our party; and I need not describe the satisfaction which beamed in their faces, notwithstanding the haggard cheeks of the

ladies, the withered and crumpled state of their dinner dresses, the shivering of the poor old Doctor in his dressing-gown, the unshorn appearance of the gentlemen's beards, and the tart and reproachful looks which still glanced from Lady Shropshire and the Baroness upon Lady Lloyd, and indeed upon us all.

Nor must I, in honesty and candour, forget myself.

'Take off your nightcap—take off your nightcap,' said Sir Lloyd to me hurriedly, 'before they open the door.'

And then, to my consternation, I found that I was standing in the midst of the ladies, with Mr. George Aberleigh's tasselled white nightcap erect upon my head, and tied under my chin. I tore the strings off, flung it into the bushes, and apologised; but I could see it was in vain. Nothing could ever reinstate me, at least in the opinion of the Baroness.

'Will you kindly ring the bell?' said Sir Lloyd, who was engaged in congratulating Lady Shropshire; and I went to the entrance-door, but was shocked to find an enormous placard on it, offering a reward of two hundred guineas to anyone who could lead to the discovery of the cause, or causes, of our disappearance. It proceeded, as we found afterwards, on the hypothesis that we had been either kidnapped, or murdered, or had absconded, or eloped, or fled from justice to America. And the paper contained a minute and not flattering description of our personal

appearance, which, as far as I myself was concerned, was assuredly, to my own conviction, anything but correct. Our dismay was not diminished by hearing the bolts cautiously withdrawn, and the window-shutters unbarred sufficiently to enable us to perceive that the house was in the possession of two London policemen, whom, as they conducted themselves with the greatest propriety, I am bound to name. They were A 1 and B 2, and excellent representatives of that valuable body of men. By this time the servants had come down, and, with a most marvellous expression of amazement, not unmixed with a strong sense of the ludicrous, at the strangeness of our appearance, they welcomed us home.

'Oh, my Lady, we have been so frightened! And, at Woodleigh, all the people have been dragging the ponds to find Lady Shropshire and the Baroness. And Mr. Pritchard has been up here, and says he is sure the place is haunted, and we are all bewitched. And so we sent up to London for the police. And the papers are full of it, my Lady, and the Government has promised a reward. But we are so glad you are come back! If we might be so bold as to ask, where have you been?'

Sir Lloyd thanked them kindly for their anxiety, but wisely evaded giving any answer to this last enquiry; and we went into the library. Sir Lloyd led Lady Shropshire to the sofa, and said—

'You will like at once, I am sure, to go to Woodleigh.'

'Certainly,' said Lady Shropshire, coldly.

'Most certainly,' echoed the Baroness, 'without a moment's delay.'

'May I not offer you some breakfast—a cup of coffee?'

'Not a drop,' said Lady Shropshire.

'Not for the world,' repeated the Baroness.

'Lady Lloyd,' said Lady Shropshire, rising from the sofa, with an air which implied that all future intercourse between the two houses would from henceforth be closed, and adjusting her arms and dress for a profound court curtsey, 'Lady Lloyd, allow me to return to you our united acknowledgments for our most charming visit.'

And the two ladies, as I before said, sunk down slowly and gracefully, till I thought they would have disappeared into the cellars.

'I am so sorry,' meekly replied Lady Lloyd, 'I am so very sorry. I felt sure you would so enjoy it.'

A contemptuous smile passed over Lady Shropshire's face.

'May I beg,' she said, 'as a most especial favour, that on no future occasion will Lady Lloyd ever think of giving me enjoyment? I prefer taking care of myself. When the carriage is ready, Sir Lloyd, I trust we may be told.'

The carriage almost immediately afterwards drove to the door. Sir Lloyd handed the ladies into it. They departed, with a most cold and formal farewell on both sides. And we were left standing by the fire in the library, preparing to go each to our different rooms. But before we separated, I was obliged to call Lady Lloyd's attention to one point.

'Let me implore you,' I said, 'without one moment's delay, to recover possession of the remaining pills. They are at present in the hands of Annette; and she is aware of their power. She is a kind-hearted girl, and she may—the very thought appals me—have formed benevolent plans for our enjoyment. She may think it conducive to the happiness of the world or of yourself, to send us all off again to Canada the first thing to-morrow morning. I may be at the bottom of the Red Sea, and the Doctor in his dressing-gown and slippers on the shores of Nova Zembla, before the clock strikes seven. We cannot be safe,' I added, looking round at the rest of the party, 'till the pills are once more in Lady Lloyd's hands. Lady Lloyd,' I added, somewhat bitterly, 'who so well knows how to use them.'

Lady Lloyd looked at me resentfully, but as Sir Lloyd seconded my entreaty, she hurried off to her room. And we all retired, to prepare ourselves, as well as we could, by a little repose and dressing, for the very awkward scenes which were evidently in

preparation for us during the course of the day—such as the investigation by the police, and the visits of the neighbourhood, whose sympathy and curiosity would doubtless bring them in shoals to enquire into the history of our departure and our return.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LADY LLOYD'S FOURTH WISH.

ANYONE who has sat up for two nights running in a hard Windsor chair, and wrapped up in a by no means inodorous bear-skin, and who has then been carried through the air some thousands of miles, and deposited in the cold grey of the morning in his own comfortable bed-room, will understand easily the relief with which I threw myself into my easy chair, debating whether I should try to get some sleep in bed before the breakfast-bell rang, or should enjoy at once the delight of which I had been deprived the day before, of a sponge bath and of shaving. But I found that sleep was hopeless: the dread of Annette hung over me like a cloud, which at any moment might burst upon our devoted heads in some frightful form of an attempt to make us happy. I reflected, and tried to decide whether I was in her good graces or not. Was it possible that she might regard me as a disagreeable visitor, whose removal to Botany Bay or Siberia would conduce to the welfare of mankind? No! I comforted myself with the hope that I was

rather a favourite than not. She always smiled when I met her tripping past me, with her light little foot and neat dress, towards the harem staircase, and never failed to greet me with a curtsey, and we always exchanged a good morning. And I remembered with satisfaction that I had brought her a ribband from Coventry, the last time I was at Brooklyn; so that I had less fear of being sent there myself. But then from the very opposite side of the horizon there arose up a still more black and threatening cloud. Was it possible (vanity—perhaps a foolish vanity—gave weight to the frightful vision), was it possible I could be too great a favourite? Might not Annette feel that to have a young and amiable person devoting herself to take care of me in my mature age, would be a wonderful addition to my happiness? Might she not resolve to undertake herself that duty—and—marry me? I was not more than sixty; my hair not quite so grey as it is now; my figure—my face—but I will not dwell upon them. Yet as I looked anxiously in the glass, I asked myself, if such a thought might not have crossed her mind; and if it was possible or lawful for the Fairies to marry me against my will. Or was there in that charming Act of Parliament which opens such delightful vistas of unlimited matrimony to future generations of Englishmen, any clause enabling an English judge to release me. And now it was that I realised fully for the first time the meaning of a formid-

able friend—a love than which hate were better. At last, unable to bear the state of suspense, I dressed myself, and went downstairs to the library. It was Sunday morning; but I need scarcely say that any thoughts connected with the day were entirely secondary to the absorbing anxieties consequent upon our present position. I went at once to the library, and there, to my surprise, found Lady Lloyd still in her crumpled dinner dress, mounted on one of the library ladders.

'Oh, Uncle Peter!' she said, 'can you help me? Do you know where I can find Buchan's Medicine?'

'No,' I said; 'but let me search for it. The last time I saw it, Sir Lloyd had it to look out a prescription for Mrs. O'Dowd's thumb.'

'Is there not,' she said, 'a good article on medicine in the Encyclopædia? Will you find it for me as quickly as you can? Pray be quick! poor Annette is so sick!'

In haste I found Buchan's Medicine, and turning the pages, and casting my eye over the long list of human disorders, all of them—from a cut finger to an attack of plague—terminating in the same awful bouquet of hiccups, convulsions, and death, I soon found—what indeed I knew before—that brandy and laudanum were recommended for that special affliction under which Annette was labouring. Lady Lloyd was hastening out of the room to her medicine chest, but I could not help whispering to her—

'Have you secured the pills?'

'Yes,' she said, 'all that are left. But Annette has swallowed five of them, besides the one she took to bring us back. And they have made her so dreadfully sick, that I do not know what in the world to do with her.'

'Do tell me,' I said. 'Do stop one moment and let me know the worst. I can neither rest nor sleep till I know that we are safe.'

Lady Lloyd closed the door carefully behind her, looked round the room, and behind the great Indian screen, to see that no one could hear, and then informed me, in a whisper, that when she went to her room, she found the phial on her dressing-table, but five of the pills gone. She went at once to Annette's room, and found her very ill, and very frightened. She at once confessed that, on finding the prodigious power of the pills, she had been unable to resist the temptation of appropriating, or annexing (why should we apply harsh words to the little pilferings of servants any more than to the vast robberies of kings and emperors, and the congresses of democracies?) five of the pills, which she had swallowed consecutively, attaching a wish to each.

I listened with breathless anxiety to their enumeration, but derived comfort by observing that Lady Lloyd did not seem to labour under any difficulty or delicacy, as if charged with the painful duty of

breaking to me any announcement which threatened danger to myself. The first wish, Annette acknowledged, was that she might become the fortunate possessor of a blue sprigged muslin dress, which Lady Lloyd had worn only twice. But the pill produced no result. No blue sprigged muslin made its appearance. The second was that she could have five pounds to send to her mother, who wanted it to pay her rent. And certainly, at that moment, there did appear upon the table five glittering coins, but they were farthings instead of sovereigns. The third pill was wedded to a wish that Jenkyns, the upper footman, who was her aversion, was at the bottom of the Specific.

'Of the what?' I asked.

'Of the Specific,' she said, replied Lady Lloyd; 'but I imagine she meant the Pacific. And the Fairies probably did not understand her. For I have just seen Jenkyns crossing the hall. The fourth was swallowed with a prayer that her hair might curl as beautifully as Florinda's, the Baroness's lady's maid. But this also was unsuccessful. And the last was as yet uncertain, for it was still in futurity. It contained a hope that at the next tea-drinking in the garden, Mr. Barton at the farm might ask her to dance. The poor girl,' Lady Lloyd said, 'was as penitent for her abstraction of the pills, as we were for having meddled with them, when we found ourselves in Canada without them.' And Lady Lloyd had taken care to im-

prove the occasion by speaking earnestly of the danger of discontented dreamings, and of the evil results of holding any communication—in her grade of life—with witches or fairies, or any supernatural personages, to all of which Annette had listened very humbly, with promises of amendment of life, and with a hearty wish, as ineffective as her five pills had been, that, if they were to be of no use, she might never have been tempted to swallow them. On hearing Lady Lloyd's report, I was much comforted. It was evident that I myself was safe. And yet I am not sure that a little drop of mortified vanity did not mix with the cup of comfort, when I found that I had occupied no place whatever in the mind of poor Annette, even with five wishes at command.

'It is,' I said, 'evident to me, that the account which the good Fairy has given us of these wonderful pills is perfectly correct. You observe that they are valuable only for promoting the happiness of others, not for any selfish enjoyment. And thus, in Annette's case, the sprigged muslin pill, and the curling hair pill, and the bottom of the Specific pill, produced no other effect than to make her sick. The last, doubtless for this reason, that the removal of Jenkyns, the footman, to the bottom of the ocean, unlike Mr. Pritchard's departure for Nova Zembla, bore only on the relief of Annette's own personal annoyances, while Sir Lloyd had contemplated the general benefit.

of society. 'All this,' I said, 'is satisfactory. And in the case of the five pounds pill, it is also clear that the diminution of the sum to farthings, was caused by her taking the pill whole instead of sipping a few spoonfuls, after it had been dissolved in the four gallons of water. It is evidently one of the new medicines, which the less you take of it, the more it operates.'

'Yes,' said Lady Lloyd, a reviving gleam of benevolence and interest dawning upon her again. 'It is clear that no one is to blame but ourselves for the mistakes we have made. And it would be very unwise if we threw away such opportunities as we still possess for promoting the happiness of mankind. The loss of these five pills, however, is most serious.'

'Very serious,' I replied.

'No one,' she continued, 'can tell what good we might have done with them.'

'No one,' I said, emphatically. 'You are quite right.'

'One thing I feel,' said Lady Lloyd, 'we must not offend the good Fairy. I will explain to her how the five pills were lost, and perhaps she might give us five more to replace them.'

I did not like, in her present frame of mind, to give full vent to the deprecatory interjection which rose to my lips, at the contemplation of five more pills, and their probable perils. But I entreated her to dress as soon as possible, and let us hold a council immediately

after breakfast; for I perceived we were threatened with most serious awkwardnesses from the publicity which had unfortunately been given to our disappearance. But especially I implored her to keep the strictest watch over the remaining pills, since it would be absolutely necessary that Mrs. Aberleigh, the next in succession, should take one the following morning, in order to obliterate all memory of the preceding days from the minds not only of Lady Shropshire and the Baroness, but of the servants, and especially, I said, of the public. The newspapers, I knew, would be full of us.

Lady Lloyd promised that she would lock them up safely, without a moment's delay. And as she left the room, appeared Mr. Gray, the butler—his face continuing to bear the same suspicious, alarmed, and curious expression—and in his hand a salver piled with newspapers and letters. Several of the former, he told me, had been sent to various members of the household, as giving the reports of our absence, and it was thought we might like to see them. My heart failed me as I looked at them. I opened the *County Sun*, turned to the column of Rayadil news, and had the satisfaction of reading the following paragraph :—

'FASHIONABLE FESTIVITIES.—On Thursday, Sir Lloyd Lloyd and Lady Lloyd threw open their beautiful grounds to a large and fashionable circle of friends, including all the most distinguished families in the

vicinity of Rayadil. The band of the Volunteer Rifles was in attendance, and performed a choice selection of classical music. Dancing commenced about four o'clock, and continued to a late hour in a magnificent marquee, which we understand was supplied by our tasteful and talented townsmen, Messrs. Canvass and Bunting. The grounds were brilliantly illuminated, and the company did not separate till a late hour, charmed with the urbanity of their distinguished host and his beautiful and accomplished Lady. We understand that it is the intention of her ladyship to give a succession of these charming *réunions* to the fashionable society of Rayadil during the present season.'

'Well,' I said, 'here is a beginning. This is an omen—the first big drop of the thunder shower. If this is the account given by those trustworthy intelligencers of the poor old women and children's tea-drinking, what appearance shall we make when they proceed to announce our flitting? I turned to the next page, saw 'Second Edition,' in large print, and my eye was immediately caught by a paragraph headed with capital letters, 'Mysterious Disappearance.'

'The neighbourhood of a certain town not one hundred miles from Rayadil, has been thrown into consternation by the sudden disappearance of a gentleman of rank and fortune, who has been long distinguished for his position as a magistrate of the county. Among

the many rumours which are circulated, we believe we may point with undoubted certainty to very serious charges of a criminal nature, which will occupy the gentlemen of the long robe at the next assizes. The unhappy Baronet's family have all fled with him to the Continent.'

I dropped the *County Sun*, and opened the *Cardiganshire Herald*.

'The neighbourhood of Rayadil has been plunged into sorrow by the elopement of a beautiful and accomplished lady, the wife of a distinguished baronet. It appears that her ladyship took advantage of a charming *fête champêtre*, to which the *élite* of the county had been invited, to leave her home undetected. The companion of her flight is understood to be a young and talented physician of great personal attractions, Dr. D——, who has been for some time an *habitué* of the mansion, and who has treacherously availed himself of the confidence of the wretched husband to destroy his domestic felicity. Sir —— is, we understand, in pursuit of the guilty pair, accompanied by Peter P——, Esq. It is certain that the fugitives took an early train to London, and are now sojourning at Boulogne.'

I dropped the *Cardiganshire Herald*, and opened the *Caermarthen Star*, where another paragraph faced me, headed also in capital letters :—

'ELOPEMENT IN FASHIONABLE LIFE.—A great

sensation has been caused in the fashionable world of Rayadil by the elopement of P—— P——, Esq., and the fair young widow and authoress, Mrs. B—m—t. The event took place on Thursday last from the mansion of Sir ——. The attached couple selected the occasion of a *déjeuner* given by the beautiful and accomplished Lady ——, to quit the mansion unobserved, and are supposed to be *en route* for Scotland. They have been pursued by all the members of the family assembled at the Hall, but no tidings have yet been received. It is probable that the hymeneal knot will have been tied before the fugitives can be overtaken. Their united age verges on 120.'

Once more I dropped the *Caermarthenshire Star*, and opened the *Cardiff Times*.

'The family party assembled at the mansion of Sir —— has been suddenly broken up by the disappearance of the young and accomplished Mrs. H—th—rn from the residence of her brother, a distinguished baronet. We forbear to enter into the rumours connected with this most distressing event. It is whispered in fashionable circles that cruelty on the part of the husband, a well-known member of the scientific world, has led to this catastrophe. The lady is supposed to have quitted the mansion in company with P—— P——, Esq. The whole family is in pursuit of the fugitives.'

I left the *Cardiff Times*, and took up the *London*

Satirist, where a history was given of us at full length, with only the vowels in the names left out. It contained a wonderfully ingenious collection of horrors, comprising, amongst other notorious offences, bigamy, forgery, duelling, and supposed murder, in which last my own consonants figured as principal. Details were given, as it seemed, with most scrupulous accuracy. The colour of coats, the words of a dialogue, the exact moment in the hour, were specified from the testimony of eye-witnesses, or from researches at the police office. A sensation novel, in fact, had been made out of us, and derived the strongest credibility from the fact that it appeared in the middle of a catalogue of real towns, with evidently real names attached to them, after the following fashion :—

'Newbury. We recommend Mrs. G—d—l, No. 8, B—r—d St., not to walk so often by herself by the side of the canal. She has been seen.'

'Southampton. Mr. T—m—d, at the Red House, had better look to his wine cellar.'

'Durham. A certain corpulent prebendary, with red hair and the gout, is warned that our eye is upon him.'

'Leicester. We have received the letter about Mr. and Mrs. W——, at the linendraper's shop, and shall publish it next week.'

As these interesting communications all evidently

bore the stamp of reality, I was not surprised to find another, recommending Molly Bond, cook in the house of P—— P——, Esq. (with the locality of my own residence attached), not to go so often to the public-house; and as I had myself only a few days before given her precisely the same warning, it was impossible to doubt the strict veracity, and the ubiquitous observation of the *Satirist.*

I laid aside the newspapers for a moment, to open an envelope directed to me, containing a printed packet. The address was in the handwriting of a gentleman of my acquaintance, who, evidently in great perplexity, had forwarded the paper to me. It was from the editor of a new biographical dictionary of living celebrities and notorieties; and the article attached to my name had been sent to my friend, with a request that he would correct any inaccuracies, and add any information which he might wish to give to the public. It was something to the following effect:—

'Peter Pumpkin, Esq., whose mysterious disappearance on the 29th of August, 18—, caused so alarming a sensation in the neighbourhood of Rayadil, was the second son of Joshua Pumpkin, Esq., of Pumpkin Hall, in the county of Middlesex. He was born February 24, 1802, at half-past four in the afternoon, and was nursed during his infancy by Mrs. Betsey Brown; by whose care he was safely brought through the

measles, the small-pox, and the hooping-cough. The register of his birth is yet extant in the village church, written in a tremulous hand by the Rev. Henry Ditcher, still rector of the parish, and to whose courtesy we are indebted for a sight of the original document, of which we present our readers a facsimile.

'At the age of five years, Mr. Pumpkin was entrusted to the care of Miss Cook, a well-known and successful instructress of youth. At twelve years of age he was removed to the Free Seminary or Grammar School of his native town; an establishment conducted, at that time, by the Rev. Dr. Smith, who had also the honour of educating the first cousin of Lady Jones, and the private secretary to the late Lord Mayor.'

But I forbear giving the remainder of the article, which, with the exception that all the dates were wrong, and all the facts had nothing to do with me, was wonderfully minute, and would doubtless tempt every one mentioned in it to buy a book in which their names were so immortalised. At the close I read the following sentence :—

'The unhappy gentleman, whose mysterious disappearance has entitled him to be enrolled in our Biographical Sketches, was in other respects remarkable for nothing but a rather long nose, and a lameness caused by a fall from a tree in early life. His talents were much overrated by his friends; and it is a consolation to reflect that society will not be deprived of any orna-

ment by his mysterious removal. He has left a wife and four children to lament his loss.'

Through this last piece of information I was about to draw my pen, but thought it a pity to waste the ink, or an envelope, by returning the corrected document, and so consigned it to the waste-paper basket.

I cannot omit the *Hue and Cry*, which, under the head of 'Suspected Murder and Kidnapping,' gave a sketch of our features anything but complimentary, and republished the placard offering a reward for our discovery. Whilst the *Illustrated News* of the next week, as I saw by the advertisement, was to contain portraits of Mrs. Beaumont, and myself, and Sir Lloyd, with sketches of the windows from which we each made our escape; also a view of the house, a drawing of the knife with which Mr. Heathorn had pursued Mrs. Heathorn and attempted to murder her, and a spirited sketch of a carriage-and-four containing the Doctor and Lady Lloyd, followed closely by another carriage-and-four, in which were seated the remainder of the family pursuing the fugitives.

There was also an advertisement, which, to secure attention, was printed with the letters upside down. It was from a chemist, who, taking advantage of the fact that we had probably been poisoned by some mineral pills, urged strongly that all families should have constantly by them Dr. Ollapod's celebrated antitoxicum. Another, referring to the fact that our

disappearance had taken place after a school children's tea-drinking, impressed upon the public the great saving and economy of purchasing the new Oriental Hyson tea at *2s. 2d.* a pound, to be procured only at Messrs. Bohea, No. 281, High Holborn. Nor must I omit a cheap excursion train, advertised by the Great Western, to enable every one to improve the Sunday by a visit to the house and grounds at Brooklyn, and the spot where the supposed murders were committed.

My own letters were next to be opened. They were enclosed in one packet, and sent by a cousin, who wrote a few lines saying that they had been addressed to him, as the person most likely to forward them. He lamented over my fall, and begged to terminate all connection with me.

The first of the enclosed epistles was from Madame Tussaud, requesting permission to mould my face in wax, as an addition to her Chamber of Horrors. A second was from the manager of a London theatre, who was prepared at once to bring out a grand sensational melodrama, founded on the murder committed by me, and our subsequent disappearance, and who offered any fair sum for the coat and waistcoat in which I had committed the deed, and, if possible, for the razor or knife, as being certain to draw large audiences. A third was from a distant acquaintance, who, like George Selwyn, was a great *amateur* of executions.

He reminded me of our having been introduced at the house of a mutual friend, and petitioned me, in case I came to the scaffold, to employ any interest I might have with the ordinary or jailor to secure him a good place for witnessing the execution, and admitting him to see me at supper the night before, and, if possible, at breakfast the next morning. This being one of the most interesting features in such exhibitions.

'Well!' I said to myself, 'one thing at least I have gained by the pills. I am no longer an obscure individual, but a notoriety. If I am in London next spring, I shall be bored to death with invitations.'

I had, however, no leisure for musing over my own prospects. The rest of the party appeared now with very worried faces, all with letters in their hands.

Sir Lloyd had received letters from his bankers and lawyers, requesting that he would immediately close his connection with them. The Lord Lieutenant had written, stating that unless an explanation was given, it would be necessary to erase his name from the magistracy. Lady Lloyd received three earnest and compassionate exhortations from neighbouring clergymen, to repent of her sin, accompanied with offers to procure her admission into a reformatory. Mrs. Beaumont had a warning, full of regret and amazement, from a spinster friend, reminding her that such a marriage as hers, though valid in law, was not

reputable in English society, and recommending her to be married over again, at St. George's, Hanover Square. For the Doctor was brought a communication from his College, at Cambridge, which was evidently of no agreeable nature. And Mr. and Mrs. Heathorn both received offers from persons acquainted with proctors in the Divorce Court, proposing to arrange their matters satisfactorily. And lastly Sir Lloyd had received from a distant acquaintance and old school-fellow, whose life was spent in urging others to be good, an entreaty that, as the only way of atoning for his crime, he would at once marry Mrs. Aberleigh; his correspondent being apparently unaware that Mrs. Aberleigh was already his mother-in-law.

I referred once more to the county paper, to see if it contained any notice of the disappearance of Lady Shropshire and the Baroness. But I found only a brief paragraph, stating that they had suddenly been summoned to Paris by the alarming illness of a near relative, the Duchess of Montecavallo (a name which I had never heard, and a person whom I verily believe did not exist), and that they had been compelled to leave home without even time to change their dress, or give notice to the Duke and Duchess of Brecon, and a large party who had been invited to dinner. I found afterwards that for this piece of veracious intelligence the newspaper was indebted to Lady Shropshire's steward, who had been a clerk in a Govern-

ment office, and therefore well understood how to purvey information for public curiosity, in the least inconvenient form.

As we sat round the breakfast-table, with very downcast, melancholy faces, I thought it better not to suppress my real opinion of the gravity of our position; but at the same time to console the party with one hope. Four pills still remained. And if the Lethe wish, as I had named it, proved as successful in the present case as it had done before (and I did not despair of this), we might still hope on the next morning by half-past six to have obliterated all traces of our calamity from the minds of the public. The difficulty would be how to tide over the perplexity of the next twenty-four hours. Sir Lloyd and Mr. Heathorn were at first strong advocates for abandoning any further attempts to promote the happiness of the world, at least through the machinery of the pills. But Mrs. Aberleigh, next in order of succession, was so satisfied, as indeed I was myself, that nothing but entire oblivion could ever rehabilitate us in public opinion, even though a modern historian should undertake to whitewash us; and she was also cherishing so fondly some favourite and infallible schemes of her own for the regeneration of society, that we at last resolved that the pills should be committed to her.

'Our chief difficulty,' I said, 'will be to-day. Happily being Sunday, not many persons are likely to

call to express their sympathy, or satisfy their curiosity. But some we may expect. If they are not admitted, the rumours will be confirmed; if we let them in, and prevaricate or contradict each other in answer to their enquiries, the worst suspicions will be exaggerated; and if we tell the truth we shall be put into a madhouse. My opinion is, that we had better admit some of the first visitors. And if the rest of the party will be engaged, and will promise,' I added, looking especially at the young ladies, 'neither to gossip with their maids, nor to write long confidential letters to darling Matilda and dearest Charlotte, I, who am rather deaf, will venture to confront the enemy. Let us tide over to-day, and to-morrow everything will be righted, and blotted from the memory of man.'

I spoke as the recognised Nestor of the party, always ready to jump upon my legs, and give advice to everybody in every emergency, and the rest, in Homeric language, murmured applause, and commanded to do as I enjoined. I had scarcely finished my harangue, when the bell was heard to ring, and Gray, the butler, announced that Mr. Collis, the clergyman of the parish, was in the morning room, and I accordingly went to receive him.

His face was saddened with real and unaffected sympathy and sorrow. 'I am come,' he said, 'too early, I fear—but I could not delay a moment, though possibly it may be intrusion—to enquire, if I can be

of any use to poor Lady Lloyd in her disconsolate position. May I ask, if any tidings have been heard of the unhappy man? Has Sir Lloyd been discovered?'

But before I could answer, another visitor was announced, Mrs. Brooks.

'I am come, on my way to the school,' she said, 'to enquire for poor Sir Lloyd. How is he? How does he bear the blow? He is returned, I hear. Has he succeeded in overtaking that poor creature?—so young, so charming, whom we all thought so good. What a fall! And the Doctor, too; at his age!'

Once more, before I could reply, the door opened, and Lady Whitehead was announced. I went up to her to shake hands. But she started back with as much disgust as she would have exhibited, if a cobra capella, or a boa constrictor, had offered the same civility. Both her own hands were held up in a forbidding, expelling attitude, as she retired behind the defences of Mrs. Brooks's expanded crinoline.

'How do you do, Lady Whitehead?' I cried, putting my hand to my deaf ear to catch her answer. 'How is the Admiral?'

But once more she waved me off, with words half uttered, but which, from the configuration of the mouth, I gathered to be either 'monster' or 'wretch,' but which of the two I could not exactly distinguish.

'How is his rheumatism?' I continued. But no

further answer was vouchsafed, only a look which was intended to shrivel me up with shame and remorse, like a blighted leaf.

'Yes,' I said, again applying my hand to my ear; 'Mrs. Heathorn and I were just proposing to drive over, and call upon you.'

'What!' she exclaimed. 'Atrocious!'

'Yes,' I said, 'Mr. Heathorn asked us to apologise for his being unable to come. A bad cold ——.'

'Mr. Heathorn!' she repeated—she had evidently been perusing the *Cardiff Times*. But at this moment another visitor was announced, Miss Easton, who, I knew, was a devout believer in the *Caermarthen Star*.

'Good morning!' I said, as I went up to her, and took her hand—an act which, however, she seemed to doubt the propriety of permitting. 'Mrs. Beaumont asked me to deliver a message to you. We returned early this morning.'

'So soon!' she exclaimed. 'Mrs. Beaumont! Where were you overtaken?'

'It was very cold,' I said, 'and we came back.'

'Cold!' cried Miss Easton. 'Monstrous!'

But I was very deaf, nodded, and smiled, as in entire approbation of her opinion.

'Where was poor Sir Lloyd discovered?' asked the clergyman, evidently affected.

'Where did he overtake her?' said one of the ladies.

'Very well, I thank you,' I screamed at the top of my voice. 'Would you speak a little louder? I am so deaf, and have not my trumpet with me.'

'Where did you all go to?' said Lady Whitehead.

'Yes,' I screamed, 'very charming weather, good for the turnips, but rather cold.'

'Is Lady Lloyd brought back?' asked Mrs. Brooks, sympathetically.

'We all went together,' I answered. 'It was so pleasant!'

'Where did you go to?' impatiently repeated Lady Whitehead.

'No, I thank you,' I said; 'I am very much obliged, but I have some already.'

'Where did you all go to?' she again repeated, coming up close to my deaf ear, and screaming with indignation and vexation into it.

'I will tell them,' I screamed in return. 'They will be so glad to hear it.'

'Provoking man!' cried the baffled lady. While all the rest of the party sat looking at each other in bewildered silence.

'May I venture to ask,' said the clergyman, 'who went with you?'

'No,' I said, 'I have not seen the *Times* of to-day. It comes by the evening post, and we shall not have it till to-morrow. But I do not think there has been another battle.'

'What o'clock did you get back?' said Miss Easton.

'Yes,' I said, 'I agree with you perfectly. But my own sympathies are with Austria.'

'Did you get back early?' asked Mr. Collis, once more straining his voice to be heard a mile off.

'I am sorry,' I said, 'you cannot stay longer. But I will ring for the carriages. Good morning, good morning! If you could have stayed longer, perhaps you might have seen Sir Lloyd and Mrs. Heathorn.'

'Good gracious!' exclaimed the whole party, 'what a provoking man! He is as deaf as a post! It is quite useless talking to him.'

'No, I thank you,' I replied. 'Let me take you down by the lower terrace;' and without waiting for any further colloquy, I opened the door, led the way into the hall, took my hat, and courteously escorted them to the little gate, where the carriages were waiting.

'Shall we not see you again soon?' I asked, smilingly. But the reproachful, indignant, and disappointed looks repelled any further attempt at civility. And once more bowing, offering to shake hands, and saying 'good-bye,' I returned to the house.

After this, I thought we might safely order ourselves to be denied to any further visitors. And as we did not go out of the grounds, the day passed off quietly though gloomily. I only observed both Sir Lloyd

and Mr. Heathorn, with Mrs. Heathorn on his arm, earnestly engaged in conversation with Mrs. Aberleigh; and inferred, from the manner of all four, that they were imploring her to spare them the next morning, and graciously omit them from any plans which she might be forming for the happiness of the world.

'I am thinking,' she afterwards said to me, rather indignantly, 'of the poor, not of politics, or of mere acquaintances. The rich can take care of themselves.'

I knew her benevolent nature, and her constant efforts to ameliorate the condition of the poor people in the neighbourhood. And hearing this, I thought it unnecessary to give her pain, by entreating her, as the others had done, not to trouble herself with my enjoyment. And so at last the day closed, and we retired to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. ABERLEIGH'S PILL.

IT WAS a comfort, on waking the next morning, to find myself in my own bed and my own room, and not in Canada, or Siberia, or at the bottom of the Specific, wherever that might be. It was also reassuring to hear, in reply to a little twisted note, which I despatched to Mrs. Aberleigh, that she had duly taken the pill. Still more satisfactory was it, on hastily running over my papers and letters before I went down to breakfast, to find that there were no leading articles about us in the *Times*. The *Illustrated News* was before me, but without any woodcuts or portraits of ourselves. The Lethe wish had once more been successful; and I congratulated myself on the temptation offered to future experiments by such facility in obliterating the consequences. So also a relief and composure, to which we had been for some days strangers, appeared in all the faces round the breakfast-table. No allusion to our murder, or to elopement, or marriage, or crime of any kind, appeared in

any of our letters. We breathed once more with freedom. Only on Mrs. Aberleigh's thoughtful and benevolent countenance there played at times a kindly smile, with some faint mixture of compassion for those who had so unsuccessfully preceded her in their dreams of beneficence. But she said nothing; and we none of us, of course, ventured to ask for her intentions, satisfied in our own minds that they could only concern the poor, who must be bettered by them. She left the breakfast-table early; and as I took up the newspaper and glanced at the debates, and scanned the list of deaths, births, and marriages in the supplement of the *Times*, I pondered on the provoking pertinacity with which the names in the marriage list are all printed in the same type, and on the trouble it took to distinguish the bridegroom and the bride from their father and their grandfather, the clergyman and the assistant clergyman—and half proposed to myself that, should the pills come to me, I would promote the happiness of the world by compelling the editor of the *Times* to simplify matters, as I believe he afterwards did for a short time, by a larger type for the two most important of the personages in each ceremony. But my meditations were interrupted by Mrs. Aberleigh, who appeared dressed in her plain shawl, straw bonnet, and thick walking shoes, and proposed that I should accompany her to Rayadil. I confess I rather shrank from the proposal. For by this time

an undefined dread had seized me of any proximity to the benevolent persons who might be possessors at the time of such unbounded power, and such desire to make myself or others happy. But it would have been ungracious to refuse the request, especially when the person who made it was one whom I so respected and admired, and in whose good sense, as well as right feeling, I had so much confidence. And I accordingly offered Mrs. Aberleigh my arm, and we proceeded on our walk.

'You will be curious,' she said, 'to see what my plans are. Poor Mary is so young, and Sir Lloyd is carried away by his political views and general studies! It is not safe to entrust such minds with this extraordinary privilege. Why should Mary have brought us into such a sad scrape, by meddling with Lady Shropshire and the Baroness? You will see that I am only thinking of the poor.'

'I am rejoiced to hear it,' I replied, 'for all our sakes. But dear me!' I exclaimed, 'here is Lady Shropshire in her pony-carriage; and the Baroness is with her.'

As I said the words, my heart sank within me. But what was my relief, when the carriage stopped, and friendly hands were stretched out!

'We are going on to Brooklyn to call,' said Lady Shropshire. 'I have not seen you for such an age. We want you all to come over and dine with us next week. Only a quiet party.'

I believe my face was scarlet, but the relief was indeed great. The Lethe wish had been successful: Pennicocosheetag and Canada, the brandy and the bear-skins, the Asylum and the prospect, were completely obliterated from their memories. And with fresh hope and vigour, and, I confess, with freshly awakening plans for realising my own dreams of beneficence with impunity, I once more shook hands, saw the pony-carriage drive off; and Mrs. Aberleigh and myself, not without a glance at each other, in which congratulaion was subdued by a slight touch of conscience, as if we were accomplices in an imposture, continued our way to the town.

Now at the entrance of Rayadil, as at the entrance of most Welsh, of all Irish, and of some English towns, there was a row of miserable squalid cabins, which had for several years been Mrs. Aberleigh's abomination. And repeated and energetic had been the denunciations with which, from time to time, she had visited the careless or hardhearted owners, who allowed such hovels to be tenanted by human beings, and even exacted rent for them. They were, in fact, capacious pigsties, and nothing more. And observing that her step quickened, and her eye brightened, as we approached the turning which commanded the perspective of this suburb, I at once imagined what I was to see. The filthy dilapidated row of wigwams was no more. A line of plain, but solid, comfortable

cottages, with whole glazed windows and slated roofs, and each with its little garden before and behind it, surrounded by green pales, and planted with cabbages and potatoes, and not without some potherbs and flowers, now greeted the eye. Mrs. Aberleigh turned to me with a look of triumph, to which I could not help responding by a cordial congratulation.

'It is the poor,' she said, 'whom we ought to help. And the first thing is to begin with their houses. How can they be good or happy, if they are living in pigsties? I must go and see how they are getting on. How charmed they will be! Well, Mrs. Budd, how are you to-day?' she enquired of a trapesing, pallid-looking woman, with most unkempt hair and slipshod shoes, who, with her arms in a washing-tub, and three wretched dirty children crawling and squabbling on the floor, appeared on our opening the door of the first improved tenement. But Mrs. Budd's expression by no means bespoke happiness, though, as the Fairy had promised, the sudden change in her abode had awakened no alarm in her mind.

'Oh, ma'am,' she said, 'such a to-do! They (who *they* meant we did not enquire) have been and turned us all out of house and home; and what to do we doesn't know!'

Mrs. Aberleigh started back with as much disappointment as dismay. And a conversation ensued, which, I fear, however, I must abridge, as I am a very

bad reporter of a dialogue in a language with which I am not familiar. A brief summary of our colloquies with the inhabitants of the New Street will suffice to inform you, that instead of being delighted with the change in their domicile, every one of the inhabitants, without exception, was fuming with indignation against the '*they*,' who had robbed them of their former comforts. Mrs. Budd did not know where to put her washing-tub. Mrs. Higgs know'd she should catch the rheumatis. Silas Blake was putting tiles on the chimney to prevent the smoke escaping, and the warmth with it; not understanding that the object of an English fireplace and chimney is evidently to warm not the room but the clouds. Mr. and Mrs. Timms, with Mr. and Mrs. John Timms, their married son and daughter-in-law, together with four other sons and daughters, of ages varying from sixteen to eight, were engaged in re-transferring their sleeping accommodations from the several chambers into which they had been distributed, so as to occupy one room themselves, and offer the hospitality of the others to similar patriarchal families of lodgers. Paddy O'Toole was covering over an iron grate, which had been sunk at the entrance to exclude from the family hearth 'the gentleman who paid the rent.' And Molly Morgan, being in immediate want of some firewood, had already commenced operations on the green pales. Every one wore a face of annoyance

and resentment: the men were surly, because they had been deprived of the comfort of warm dirt, and the women were grumbling at being interfered with; all were fretting and quarrelling about some compulsory departure from their former habits, some loss of unsuspected enjoyments. At the end of the street we met Mr. Brown the rector, who, in reply to Mrs. Aberleigh's faintly hazarded enquiry, 'what he thought of the new improvements?' merely said—

'It is very kind of the landlord. The former hovels were a great disgrace. But perhaps,' he added, 'we are at times rather too rapid in our operations. It would be very inconvenient to a young lobster to be transferred suddenly into the shell of an old one. Improvements, I think, must come rather from within than from without. But then you know,' he said, 'I am an old bigot, and do not understand reform. I fear, however, in a week's time, we shall be in a worse state than before.'

And the Rector bowed and passed on.

Mrs. Aberleigh looked as we usually do look when we receive some sharp home-cutting thrust from a friend from whom we expected nothing but applause. Not wishing to pain her, I abstained from the suggestion of many other instances in which external reforms are not likely to be accompanied with much success. Still I could not help saying one or two words. It is so hard for a person of superior mind,

who feels it his duty to admonish others, to resist the temptation of uttering now and then one of Homer's 'heart-cutting words.'

'Would it not have been as well,' I said, 'my dear Mrs. Aberleigh' (the '*dear*' was preparatory to a sharp sting)—'would it not have been as well if you had ordered the Fairies to mend Mrs. Budd's gown?'

'What would have been the use?' she replied; 'to-morrow it would have been torn again.'

'And to wash the children's hands and feet?'

'Yes,' she said, 'when the next minute they would have been making dirt pies in the gutter!'

'And to have shut up O'Toole's pig in the sty?'

'But he would have let it out,' she said.

'And to prevent Silas Blake,' I persisted, 'from stopping up the chimney?'

'But he likes the smoke!' she exclaimed. 'They all like smoke.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I see Mr. Brown was right. It is idle to make changes without us, without making them first within us. And this is the difficulty.'

'It is such a slow process,' she said. 'It takes such a time—generations perhaps.'

'Yes,' I replied, and sighed. 'But why did you not tell the Fairies to pass an Act of Parliament? It is the only way now to reform people. If you had passed an Act of Parliament, commanding them

not to like smoke, not to want to let lodgings for the purpose of getting half-a-crown a week, and not to take pleasure in the company of the pig, but to delight in neatness, cleanliness, decency, and beauty, this would surely have succeeded—at least so we think in England.'

'I do not know,' she said. 'I don't quite understand you. You are always moralising.'

And as I saw she was really mortified, I repented of my stabs, and suppressed the remainder of the lecture.

We quitted the New Street, and I accompanied Mrs. Aberleigh across the meadows, by a path which led to the farm and homestead of Farmer Flail.

'Ah!' I said, cunningly, 'I know where we are going now.'

'Of course,' was the reply; 'one of the very first persons I should think of, would be poor Martha, and that little sickly baby.'

Now Martha, as I think I have mentioned before, had been a favourite maid-servant in the family, and had been married to the very respectable and well-to-do-in-the-world Farmer Flail. And Farmer Flail, it must be known, was a most robust and powerful, as well as honest, English farmer. Six feet two in his shoes, I know not how many feet and inches across the shoulders, with a hand which, doubled up, might fell an ox, and a whole frame constructed upon the

scale and proportion of the Farnese Hercules, and developing thews and muscles worthy of Michael Angelo's saints, nymphs, and angels. He might indeed have served for a model, had the nineteenth century given birth to another stout sage, a second Dr. Johnson, and wished to exhibit another specimen of a Christian philosopher, without his clothes on, standing under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. In the neighbourhood he was generally known as the Merionethshire Giant.

The baby, on the other hand, was the very weakest of infants. It was only about eight months old; but it had been afflicted, from its first entrance into the world, with a succession of almost all the maladies and infirmities which infant flesh is heir to—croup, measles, hooping-cough—every form of infantine disorder. It had thus been a perpetual subject of commiseration, sympathy, and prescription to the whole neighbourhood, but especially to the household at Brooklyn, who still regarded their favourite Martha as a part of the family. It was sometimes brought into the drawing-room, when Martha herself came up to the house. And I think I see it now, with its little wizen face, scarcely able to do more than move its tiny worm-like fingers, or wheeze out a faint attempt at a squall. I could not for a moment doubt that the restoration of the baby to health was one of the first thoughts which had presented itself to Mrs. Aberleigh's

benevolent mind; for scarcely a day passed in which she did not go to visit poor Mrs. Flail, and deplore and prescribe for the baby. We had scarcely crossed the three meadows which led to the farm, when at the corner of the lane by the haystack, we came suddenly upon Mrs. Flail's milkmaid, running at full speed, without either cap or bonnet, and with every appearance of derangement in her hair, and terror in her face.

'What is the matter, Molly?' cried Mrs. Aberleigh.

But Molly had already shot past us.

'What is the matter?' repeated Mrs. Aberleigh; and her authoritative voice effected a moment's pause in the flying maiden.

'I can't stop,' she said, 'ma'am, I can't stop. It's breaking out, it's breaking out.'

'Breaking out!' I asked, 'what is breaking out?'

But Molly, breathless with her running, could only gurgle out indistinctly words which both Mrs. Aberleigh and myself imagined to be—

'It's the baby, sir, it's the baby!'

And she disappeared over the stile, and continued her course up to the town.

'The baby!' I said; 'what could she mean?'

'It must have been the bull,' said Mrs. Aberleigh—'that vicious bull which nearly gored Robin James the other day.'

But, on looking up, we saw the aforesaid vicious

bull grazing quietly in the Leasowes, some fields off, and before we could imagine any other thing beginning with a B which was likely to break out, we were encountered by Job Horrocks, the ploughboy from the farm, who was also running as hard as he could, and who nearly threw us down, as he came suddenly upon us round the hedge.

'What is the matter?' I said. 'Horrocks, what is the matter?'

'It's breaking out, zur,' said Horrocks, gasping for breath, 'it's breaking out; and I be running up to the town for the police and the volunteers!'

'Police!' I exclaimed. 'Volunteers! What can be the meaning? Is it a fire?'

'No, zur; it's the baby; the baby's got loose.' And without staying to give us further information, he rushed on to the town.

'Oh, I understand!' said Mrs. Aberleigh, evidently feeling rather uncomfortable, and trying to suppress by a cough a slight tremulousness of voice. 'There must be an eruption in the baby's face—a breaking out—a sign of returning health—and they are afraid it is the small-pox, which is very much about, and are sending for Mr. Jenkyns, the doctor.'

'But,' I suggested, 'Horrocks said he was breaking loose, as well as breaking out. And he certainly said he was going for the police, not for the doctor.'

'It must have been his clumsy pronunciation,' said

Mrs. Aberleigh, once more trying to disguise by a cough a weakness in her voice.

'Yes,' I said, 'the boy certainly has a sad burr in his mouth. But yet doctor does not sound at all like volunteers.'

We hastened on, however. But just before we reached the farm, we had to pass by two labourers' cottages, and here also were signs of something unusual and alarming.

'Come in, come in, you naughty, wicked child!' cried Mrs. Mackett to her little girl, who was just crawling on all fours out of the wicket. 'You come in, or it will catch hold of you.' And clutching up the child with those flattering and soothing expletives which angry mothers in labourers' cottages are in the habit of launching on the heads of their transgressing progeny, she retired hastily into the cottage, and bolted and barred the door, before we could enquire further who this formidable 'it' was.

'Let us hasten on,' I said. 'Evidently there is something amiss.'

'The baby must be ill,' said Mrs. Aberleigh.

'It can't be the dog,' I said, 'can it, which has gone mad?' And with this not very comfortable hypothesis, we arrived at the little green gate, which opens from the meadow into the kitchen garden of the farm. What was our surprise, to see the plot of grass, which lay under the large lattice window, appro-

priated to the nursery, strewed with fragments of chairs and tables, and the *débris* of various articles of pottery, which seemed to have been ejected from the window, and which Mrs. Aberleigh recognised as having formed part of the baby's ceramic establishment. The door of the house was open. And as we entered without ceremony, what should we see in the little smoking room on the right hand side of the passage, but Farmer Flail himself, in all his gigantic proportions—not, however, with his usual honest English smile on his broad features, but holding his head over a basin, into which his nose was still distilling blood, and also with the trace of a severe contusion under the eye.

'Dear me!' I cried, 'Mr. Flail, what is the matter? I hope you are not ill.'

'No, sir, no,' groaned the farmer, 'not ill! But see here, sir, what he has done to me. Look at my eye.'

Before I could enquire further as to the offending party, the mysterious 'he,' Mrs. Flail entered the room, followed by Jenny Hobbs, the nurse. Mrs. Flail herself was in a very tumbled and dismantled condition; and her face seemed rather livid than pale, as if she was slowly recovering from the embrace of a garrotter; and poor Jenny had apparently lost her cap, and with it several handfuls of hair seemed to have been torn from her head, or nearly so.

'What can have happened?' I said. 'You cannot surely have been fighting!'

'Fighting, sir!' exclaimed the farmer. 'It was the baby, sir, it was the baby!'

And then, for the first time, I remembered that a grand exciting event had been advertised in the neighbourhood, no less than the arrival of the great Champion of England (it is pleasant that such a nation as England should have such a champion), the celebrated prize-fighter, who, from his colossal size and strength, was, in the elegant and playful wit for which the noble science of self-defence is remarkable, designated as the Smasher, alias the Baby. And I inferred at once, that, for the gratification of English noblemen and gentlemen, and also to maintain the national courage of Englishmen, which would otherwise die away, and to prevent the use of stilettos, which otherwise Englishmen would certainly use when they quarrel, as Frenchmen do, and Germans, and all other people, who do not encourage prize-fighting,—that, for all these reasons, a pugilistic encounter had been arranged between the Merionethshire Giant and the aforesaid Baby, the results of which were now visible in the features of Farmer Flail. The hypothesis, however, still failed in accounting for the lividness of Mrs. Flail's cheeks, and the discomposure of the nurse's head-gear. Of course I was unwilling to utter a single word in disparagement of the national

and glorious recreation of prize-fighting. Still I could not but express some regret that a man in Farmer Flail's position should have committed himself to an encounter with so trained and scientific a champion as the Smasher, alias the Baby.

'What, sir!' exclaimed Mr. Flail, lifting up his still dripping nose from the basin. 'The Smasher, sir! It was not he that knocked me over. It was our baby.'

'Yes, sir,' sobbed Mrs. Flail and Jenny Hobbs in concert, 'our baby, our poor baby!'

'What, little Tiny!' I exclaimed in amazement.

'Oh, sir!' sobbed Mrs. Flail, 'he's bewitched, he's bewitched! Some wicked woman has bewitched him.'

And as she uttered these words, I could not but glance at Mrs. Aberleigh, and perceived that her lower lip was much depressed, and her general expression anything but easy. I succeeded, however, in extracting from the sobbing Mrs. Flail an account of what had happened. The baby had been muling and puling all night long, till about half-past six in the morning, when it dropped off to sleep; and as Mrs. Flail was watching it, she observed its white crumpled cheeks suddenly plump out, and become tinged with a healthy pink. It lay fast asleep and comfortably quiet till about a quarter of an hour before we arrived at the door, when, as Mrs. Flail was stooping down to

give it a kiss in the cradle, it suddenly woke up, threw its arms tightly round her neck, and nearly throttled her. Tiny's hug of affection was so tight, that Mrs. Flail was wholly unable to extricate herself, and was pulled upon her face into the cradle. She found means to scream for assistance to the nurse, who was in the next room; but the moment Tiny caught sight of his nurse, he clutched at her cap with both his hands, running at the same time a pin into his own. Jenny, in an effort to escape, left all her cap and a quantity of hair in the triumphal grasp of the baby, who, nevertheless, proclaimed the fact of his own disaster and scratched finger, by a howl which shook the house, and drove Mrs. Flail in horror from the room. On the stairs she met Mr. Flail, who hastened to her assistance; but stooping down to see what was the matter with the child, the baby, seemingly by accident, swung round its arm, and gave him such a blow on the nose and eye, that it nearly knocked him to the ground, and left the traces now visible in his visage. The carter happened to be in the yard, and he also came up, but trying to take hold of baby's finger, the baby kicked out so violently, that the carter's leg was nearly broken. And as the bewitched infant now prepared to get up out of its cradle, the whole party took to their heels, rushed out of the room, and locked the door behind them, while the baby employed himself in smashing the windows to

pieces, and throwing out fragments of chairs, a broken table, and various other articles of furniture, such as looking-glasses and crockery; every now and then also dashing at the wall-door, and kicking at the door, with every prospect of its speedy destruction; the pain of the scratched finger apparently stimulating him to these outbursts of indignation and acts of revenge.

It was then that the terrified milkmaid and Job Horrocks the ploughboy rushed off to the town to fetch the police and the volunteers; while the carter and others, the stoutest inmates of the establishment, were stationed to keep guard on the outside of the nursery door, expecting it to be every moment broken through by the battery of the baby's fists and heels. And, in fact, Mrs. Flail's story had scarcely come to an end, when we heard another tremendous smash, and a cry of 'He's coming, he's coming!' with a rush of heavy feet down the staircase; and I had only time to seize Mrs. Aberleigh's hand, and draw her behind the screen of the open door, that the baby might not see us and vent his fury upon our (I was nearly saying) innocent heads, when carter, ploughman, housemaids, Mr. and Mrs. Flail, rushed past us, and after them the baby, in his long nightgown and nightcap, brandishing a poker in his right hand. Across the garden they all fled, into the yard, the baby in pursuit; but, fortunately or unfortunately, a considerable horse-pond lay before them. The adults being in posses-

sion of experience as well as strength, wisely dispersed themselves round the margin. But Tiny never having yet acquired in his cradle any insight into the nature of a horsepond, and probably attracted by the smoothness and glitter of the sun on its lurid scum, dashed into it without hesitation, tried to clutch in his arms the bright reflection of the sun, and then fell on his face in the mud. Poor Mrs. Flail's cry of horror, 'He'll be drowned, he'll be drowned!' seemed too truly prophetic of the probable result. But I took the opportunity of calling back the terrified fliers. Baby, happily now unconscious and unresisting, was dragged out of the muddy water, and by my advice they tied his little hands and feet together with a cart-rope, and buckled round them the leathern traces of the farmer's gig; and having thus secured ourselves from any further outbreak, Mrs. Flail took him up in her arms, carried him into the house, and by a little warmth and application of cordials he was soon recovered. But he still continued to struggle violently, to gnash his teeth, to try to free his hands and feet, and to howl with a power of voice which might be mistaken for the bull in the Leasowes; so that we thought it advisable to swathe him up altogether in a blanket, leaving only his face open, and in fact cording him round like a bale of wool, that it might be impossible for him to break loose again. He was then laid in his cradle. While the rest were thus

employed, I took Mrs. Aberleigh to the window and ventured to ask in a whisper whether anything in the expression of her wish for the baby's recovery could account for this extraordinary outbreak.

'You wished him of course,' I said, 'to be well?'

'Yes,' she said, 'it cannot be my fault.'

'And strong?' I asked.

'Of course,' she replied rather hastily. 'Of course I wished him well and strong.'

'But strong,' I said, 'is an indefinite word. Did you fix any degree of strength? Had you any precise notion how strong he was to be? Strength,' I continued, 'like many other things of the kind, as Aristotle tells us, is not a good unless exactly proportioned to the occasion on which it is to be exerted, the person who employs it, and the object on which it is employed. Both Plato and Pythagoras warn us, that without reason it is highly dangerous, and that numbers and proportion——'

'O pray,' interrupted Mrs. Aberleigh, very much distressed and not a little irritated (for philosophy is irritating at times to the sweetest temper), 'pray do not talk to me of Plato and Pythagoras; I wished the child to be well and strong, and that was enough.'

'Are you sure,' I said, 'you did not add anything? You know the Fairy construes our words literally.'

'Well I do not know,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'I may have said very strong indeed.'

'Sometimes,' I continued, 'when we wish heartily for a thing, without specifying quantity, we use familiar expressions—illustrations—as, for instance, as strong as a horse. Did you employ this phrase,' I asked, 'to convey to the Fairies the earnestness of your desire?'

'How can you ask me?' said Mrs. Aberleigh, angrily; 'none but men use such vulgar language. Oh! now I do remember, I wished him to be as well and strong as his father. I am sure no one could complain of that.'

'Not abstractedly,' I said. 'And you see your wish has been thoroughly realised. But poor Mrs. Flail will have considerable difficulty in nursing him. I have often thought and tried to imagine what would be the consequence if poor babies, whom one so pities, arrived at their full strength and growth of body within a week or two after their birth. And we shall now have an admirable opportunity of witnessing the experiment, which for the Anthropological Society will be of the deepest interest. We must take care to record our observations. It has always seemed so hard to me that babies should be so weak and helpless, and unable to do anything for themselves. I wonder which will be found to be the best and most agreeable, to have what your kindness has given the baby, a very strong body and a very weak mind—or rather no mind at all; or what the poor Doctor

had when he lost the use of his limbs, a very strong mind and full knowledge of everything, without the power of doing anything with his body.'

But before I could try Mrs. Aberleigh's patience any more, one of the policemen arrived. He was himself, apparently, in a state of excitement; his steel-bound hat had evidently been maltreated, and his blue coat was in some disorder.

'Well, Mr. Sharp,' I said, 'I hope this poor little baby has not been assaulting you.'

'No, sir,' he said, 'it's the mob. There's a mob in the town. Somebody has been giving all the poor people a dinner at their houses, and beer and money. And they have now been at the alehouses drinking and rioting. They have broken the Mayor's windows, and I had some difficulty in getting down here, where somebody else seems to have been making a mess of it. I think, sir, you and the lady had better make haste home, as soon as you can, and go through the back street. For there seems every chance of a disturbance.'

'Alas!' I said to Mrs. Aberleigh, 'some of those vile electioneering proceedings, I suppose! What a lamentable pity it is that we cannot have an election without all this bribery, this inflaming the passions of the poor by giving them the means of intoxication!'

'I don't know, sir,' said Mr. Sharp, 'who has been doing it; but of course we shall find out. All I know

is, they are all getting drunk, all the labourers in the new street among them, and their wives and children are trying in vain to get them away from the beerhouses. And I am afraid there will be a great riot in the town to-night.'

At the mention of the new street I happened to turn my eye to Mrs. Aberleigh, who said nothing, but was evidently much disconcerted and alarmed, and proposed that we should by all means adopt Mr. Sharp's advice, and hasten home by the back street, which we accordingly prepared to do.

'What a frightful thing,' I said, as we hurried on, 'is power in the hands of an ignorant mob! Give them the means of procuring an indulgence, like that of beer for instance, which is a strengthening and wholesome beverage, if apportioned in strength and quantity to particular constitutions, and they forget all these laws of proportion, get drunk, raise a riot, and break the Mayor's windows. And what a responsibility,' I continued, 'rests upon the head of that foolish man, who knowing the weakness of these poor creatures has thus been leading them into temptation! Plato and Pythagoras——'

But Mrs. Aberleigh once more interrupted me by an impatient exclamation.

'O pray, pray spare me Plato and Pythagoras. Let us get safe home, and I will never try again to make poor people happy.'

'What,' I said, 'I trust—I hope—I have not to condole with you on a third disappointment. I beg ten thousand pardons, if I have said a word to distress you.'

'I only wished them to have a good dinner, and their beer,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'and a sovereign apiece to help to pay their rent. Surely there was nothing immoderate in that.'

'No,' I said, 'few wishes could be more benevolent, and more moderate, if all the recipients had been moderate. But alas! it is so difficult, when we give pecuniary help, to distinguish the particular characters and circumstances of the parties to whom we give it, or indeed to know anything at all of the possible results. Sometimes the surest way to ruin a person is to supply him with money. Making people happy by money is indeed not an easy task.'

Mrs. Aberleigh sighed an assent. But we had no time to say more; for we had reached the entrance of the town, through which it was necessary to pass on account of the river. A loud hurrah, with the sight of women and children, some standing with straining eyes at the half-opened doors of the houses, others barricading their windows, and others flying and screaming in the van of an advancing mob, realised too truly the announcement of the policeman. We were about to turn down a by-street to escape them, but their advance was too rapid. And to Mrs.

Aberleigh's dismay and terror, they no sooner perceived her than they burst out into a wild exulting hurrah.

'Hurrah for Mrs. Aberleigh! Three cheers for Mrs. Aberleigh! Mrs. Aberleigh for ever!'

Not, as I afterwards found, that they knew how much of their present hilarity they owed to her interest in their happiness, but because her benevolence was universally felt, and her popularity great.

'Three cheers for Mrs. Aberleigh! Hurrah for Mrs. Aberleigh!'

'Let us turn,' she exclaimed, clinging to my arm.

'Let us get into a house,' I said. But the doors at which we knocked for shelter had been safely locked and barred. A minute afterwards the enthusiastic mob surrounded us with their boisterous salutations.

'Three cheers for Mrs. Aberleigh, and one cheer more. She is the lady for us. She shall be Member of Parliament. Chair her, chair her!'

And the idea and the word once uttered ran like wild-fire through the mob.

'Let's chair her! Let's chair her!'

Before my remonstrances could be heard, or the police could arrive, a couple of shutters were torn down from an adjoining window, and a rather rickety chair was dragged out of the next house. I saw Mrs. Aberleigh, from whom I was torn away, seated on it in triumph; and with protestations that

they would not hurt a hair of her head, and only intended to give her pleasure, they hoisted the shutters, and the chair, and the lady in it, on the shoulders of four gigantic navvies, and with a vociferous chorus to that popular song, 'We won't go home till morning,' they carried her off in a grand procession. It was in vain that I attempted remonstrance or resistance. They assured me it was done to please her, to reward her for her kindness, to give her a treat. And Mrs. Aberleigh, in her novel and exalted, though rather perilous, position, did not lose her presence of mind; but planted herself as firmly as she could in the chair, and did her best to maintain the shutters in equilibrium. And not till the loud hurrahs for 'Mrs. Aberleigh, Mrs. Aberleigh for ever,' converted the movements of her bearers into a trot, and the chair was on the point of slipping off at a considerable angle, and the police made their appearance round the corner, to the dismay of the rabble, who manifested an intention to disperse precipitately without arranging a graduated descent for their precious burden—not till then did Mrs. Aberleigh abandon her possession of the pills, and, with a wish that she had never done what she had done, disappear from the eyes of us all. The shutter was dropped, the chair tossed off, the mob dispersed. But Mrs. Aberleigh was nowhere to be found. Her disappearance caused considerable astonishment to

the police, but not so much to myself. And I hastened home, fully assured that I should find her safely restored to the bosom of her afflicted family, though at the sacrifice of all the other benevolent plans which she had formed for the due employment of to-morrow's pill.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAIRY'S THREAT.

MRS. BEAUMONT and Rosa gathered round Mrs. Aberleigh when she appeared at Brooklyn, not as you might expect, to administer salts and sprinkle water, but with great interest listening to her narrative, in which there was so much of the ludicrous, that at my appearance the whole party could not forbear bursting forth into a laugh, which much relieved my apprehensions, and enabled me to congratulate Mrs. Aberleigh on her popularity, and her rare good fortune, in having for once experienced the triumph of popularity in that form so captivating to English gentlemen who desire to serve their country as statesmen, and which till ladies recover their rights and sit in Parliament they can never ordinarily enjoy.

Before, however, we had fully discussed the events of the day, Sir Lloyd came in with an open note in his hand.

'Have you heard,' he said to Lady Lloyd, 'of this

sad riot at Rayadil? Six of the ringleaders are in jail, and I shall have to go down to-morrow, with the other magistrates, to enquire into the case, so that I shall not be able to ride with you. And I am told,' he added, addressing Mrs. Aberleigh, 'that you were annoyed by them. But the note only alludes to this, and refers me to yourself for information. I trust there has been nothing rude, nothing disrespectful?'

Mrs. Aberleigh answered faintly, 'Oh no!'

'I shall punish them severely,' said Sir Lloyd; 'and we must sift the matter thoroughly, and expose the authors of the mischief. You will be obliged, I am afraid, to give evidence yourself to-morrow in court. But happily you are not nervous, and will not mind being cross-examined.'

'Give evidence!' cried Mrs. Aberleigh.

'In court!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd.

'The whole business sifted!' I said. 'The authors exposed! What is to become of us?'

We all groaned in concert. And our groan was echoed by Sir Lloyd, as soon as we had briefly explained to him the facts of the case.

'That abominable Fairy!' he exclaimed. 'I must insist upon it that the remaining pills are thrown into the fire, and that we have nothing more to do with them. She is perpetually bringing us into trouble. Where are the pills, Mary? Let us get rid of them at once. I knew it would be so.'

And Sir Lloyd's memory, like memories in general, while it retained the clearest perception of the not very wise proceedings of his friends, and the very unsatisfactory issue of their plans, failed him altogether in regard to the Emperor of Russia, the Imaum of Muscat, the American slaves, and the disappearance of Mr. Pritchard.

This was, however, not the moment to fasten on him his full share of complicity in our dealings with the Fairy. It was of more importance to call up before him the scene which awaited us the next day; himself seated as chairman of the bench of magistrates; the ringleaders of the riot at the bar; Mrs. Aberleigh in the witness-box; and Serjeant Snubbings drawing out from her in his cross-examination the whole history of the pills. Our only hope lay in another Lethe wish. Having forgotten the precise order of arrangement, I turned to Mrs. Heathorn and as a matter of courtesy suggested that perhaps she would take a pill the next morning. But Mrs. Heathorn steadily refused. Mr. Heathorn, like a sensible man, had from the beginning warned us against poison, and protested against having anything to do with the pills. And nothing, Mrs. Heathorn declared, would induce her to undertake the responsibility. She could venture,' she said, 'to try to do a little good with the means already at her disposal, and in a way clearly pointed out by proper authority. But she

had no confidence in Fairies, and not much confidence in herself. Something also she added about a prohibition against having any dealings with Fairies, Witches, and beings of that class.

But this prohibition, I assured her, clearly could not extend to us in the nineteenth century, for we were so divested of superstition that you might meet any day in London with educated persons who were in constant communication with spirits, and enjoyed their society amazingly; and indeed in some houses of fashion half the company invited to an evening party were ghosts and goblins. My reasoning, however, had no effect. And as Sir Lloyd, like myself, and indeed all of us, had a great respect for Mrs. Heathorn's judgment, her refusal so far emboldened him in his own resolution, that the remaining pills might all have been in the fire, and my story have come to an end, only at that moment a ring was heard at the door, and little Emma rushed into the room, and presented to Lady Lloyd a very minute three-cornered note, which she said had just been delivered to her at the entrance by a large bumble bee in livery. It was from the Fairy. Lady Lloyd opened it and found to her dismay that the tone of suavity which had pervaded the first communication was changed into a resentful and peremptory style, which amounted to menace. And if Lady Lloyd in her heart of hearts had ever seriously cherished a hope of replacing the five

pills, that had been wasted by Annette's absorption of them, all such hope she now felt to be vain. The note was as follows :—

'The Fairy Polypragmosyne presents her compliments to Lady Lloyd. She has heard with profound surprise, and with feelings which she is unwilling to express, that the invaluable treasure bequeathed to her by her dear departed uncle has been wasted in the most futile attempts to promote the happiness of mankind—that five of the Grand Eudæmonic Pills have been swallowed by a maidservant, and that Sir Lloyd Lloyd with a contemptuous disregard of their value, and of the Fairy Polypragmosyne's feelings, is preparing to cast those which remain into the fire. The Fairy Polypragmosyne begs to inform Lady Lloyd and her family circle that such gifts are not to be treated with contempt, without bringing down upon the offender the severest chastisement. The Fairy Polypragmosyne must therefore insist that the remaining pills be administered in strict conformity with the rules she has prescribed. For should her injunctions be disregarded, it will be necessary for her, however painful it may be, to visit the whole party with the severest punishment. And in compliance with the commands of her revered uncle, and without yielding to any weak feelings of pity or indulgence, she will be compelled without delay to name them all.'

'What,' I asked, 'what are those last words?'

'Name them,' said Lady Lloyd. 'Yes, it certainly is, "she will be compelled without delay to name them all."'

'What can she mean?' I said.

'Let me look,' said Mr. Heathorn.

'And me,' said the Doctor.

'And me,' said Mrs. Aberleigh.

'And me,' said all the rest.

'Yes,' I observed, 'it is quite legible. There can be no mistake. She will name us all. What can she mean?'

'Oh! of course,' said Mr. Heathorn, 'she will tell the whole story to all the people in the county. We shall become a general laughing-stock.'

'I rather think,' I said, 'it means that she will write a letter to the *Times*.'

But Sir Lloyd's face assumed an aspect of great gravity.

'I fear,' he said, 'it is something far more serious. But yet I was not aware that any but one person in Europe, or indeed upon earth, had power to inflict such a punishment.'

'What is it?' we all asked. 'What is it? Is it anything very dreadful?'

'Very dreadful indeed,' said Sir Lloyd, evidently much alarmed. 'It must be very dreadful!'

'But what is it?' I asked; 'what is its nature?'

'I do not know,' he said; 'I have not a notion. But I know it is very frightful.'

'Do pray explain to us,' I said, 'for I am really becoming much alarmed.'

'You know,' said Sir Lloyd, 'that there is no empire upon earth so powerful as the British, and no power so gigantic as that of the House of Commons, which, as a great statesman has told us, may overrule the crown, defy the House of Lords, annihilate property, and alter our religion, and which it is our duty at once to obey. But there is a power still greater, before which even the House of Commons itself bows and trembles. I once saw Patrick Kilgorman the member for Killballyknockclough, when he was about to challenge the Speaker, the twelve judges, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, for having expressed a doubt of the peaceful state of the population of Galway, completely quelled by one single menace from the Speaker, "Sir, I will name you." I remember I was standing by the Speaker's chair at that time, and ventured to ask him to explain to me confidentially what would follow if the punishment took effect. But the expression of unutterable horror with which the venerable Speaker held up his hands, and turned up his eyes in silence, deprecating any allusion to it, was so appalling that I have never alluded to it since. And if the abominable—I beg her pardon—I mean the excellent benevolent Fairy

threatens, unless we comply with her injunctions, to name us (whatever that may mean), I for one am prepared to yield at once, I cannot venture to defy her. Let the pill be taken to-morrow.'

Mr. Heathorn in his usual sceptical way made some observation, which I did not distinctly catch, about Fairies' threats and the Speaker's too being mere bosh. But our minds succumbed beneath the mysterious awe of the Unknown and Infinite (I am expressing myself in Germanic), and our anxiety all turned to the question —what would Mrs. Beaumont, the next in order of succession, do with her pill? It was one which many of us secretly trembled to contemplate; for we well knew her thoughts touching the improvement and reformation of society. Like most ladies, who, in addition to a most benevolent heart, possess minds more than ordinarily cultivated, she had always taken the deepest interest in the spread of education. She was a generous contributor to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; had corresponded with Lord Brougham on the subject of a new translation of Plato for the benefit of the poorer classes, and was even suspected of being the writer of a letter upon school inspection, signed Cordelia, and addressed to Sir J. K. Shuttleworth, which had been favourably noticed in the *Times*, and even alluded to in the House of Commons. But above all she was impressed, indeed thoroughly occupied at this moment,

with one grand discovery of the nineteenth century, the Competitive Examination System. This was her Morison's pill for promoting the welfare of the world. And as we turned with anxious eyes to listen to her decision, there rose up before each of us the vision of a long table covered with green cloth, and studded with inkstands and blotting paper, quills and foolscap; and also of an awful gentleman in green spectacles, moving quietly behind our backs, and administering to each of us apart a catechism of history and geography, statistics and philology, metaphysics and arithmetic, chemistry, mathematics and mechanics; all huddled together, and reminding one strongly by the mixture, of the bowl into which the doctor ordered the alderman's servant to pour an exact duplicate of his master's dinner, beginning with the turtle-soup and turbot and ending with the cheese and porter, the pine-apple and claret. It was therefore with the greatest relief that we perceived her shake her head, and wave her hands, as if in disdainful repudiation of the offer of the next pill.

'You are aware,' she said, 'what my views are. And had I been left to myself, I should undoubtedly have introduced the admirable competitive examination system into this neighbourhood, and readjusted by it the obvious irregularities which now exist in the position of individuals without regard to merit,—I mean intellectual merit, cultivation of mind. But

Mary,' she said, turning to Lady Lloyd with a reproachful look, 'Mary, I am sorry to say, has entreated me at least to postpone this for another opportunity, and having of course surrendered my own views to her convenience, I have no other object. I shall therefore certainly not trouble myself with taking the pill.'

'Thank you! thank you!' we were all on the point of exclaiming, 'you are quite right. A thousand thanks!'

But Lady Lloyd proceeded to justify the entreaties which she had urged.

'Yes,' she said, 'I am extremely indebted to Cordelia, who is willing, as she always is, to give up her own wishes to the comfort of others. The fact is, we have people coming next week, besides the archery meeting, and I could not doubt from what I know, that the competitive examination would have proved a most serious inconvenience to us.'

'I do not see it,' said Mrs. Beaumont coldly, 'but I have said I should comply with your wishes. And that is enough.'

'My dear Cordelia,' said Lady Lloyd, 'I showed you what I felt sure the result would be, even if the examination were confined to our own establishment. It would not indeed materially affect any of ourselves—any in this room—who by our education are of course prepared for it, though I presume

you would have wished us all to benefit by the plan.'

'Certainly,' said Mrs. Beaumont. 'The more widely a good system is extended the better. It would have done us all good.'

'I am sure,' I said, 'we are deeply indebted to you, my dear Mrs. Beaumont, for your kind anxiety about us. But alas! I am a sadly demoralised person. I plead guilty, I confess, though with shame and confusion, that I do not desire to be done good to, at least just now. I came down here to enjoy myself after my own fashion for a little holiday after some months of hard work. And I grieve to say, beneficial as the process doubtless is, I am not fond of being examined.'

Mrs. Beaumont looked at me through her near-sighted glasses, with a severity which made me shrink into myself, and I felt myself already, to use the elegant Oxford term, 'a plucked man.'

Lady Lloyd took advantage of my being thus quelled to proceed in her reasons for desiring at least to postpone a competitive examination pill, resulting, as it probably would result, in a readjustment of offices in the household, according to a correct scale of intellectual merit.

'You know,' she said, looking round upon our anxious faces—'you know, that, as I said just now, we have the archery meeting here next week. And

on Saturday the Southgates and the Fosters are coming to stay. And there will be dinner parties and other things of the kind. Now Grey is an excellent butler. I am always comfortable when I know affairs are under his management. But his ideas of geography are most unsettled. And I doubt whether he has the slightest notion of the difference between latitude and longitude. Thomas, the boy whom he has just taken into the butler's pantry, carried off the prize at the last school examination at Rayadil for an essay on the Equator, and would certainly beat Grey out of the field, and, of course, have his place. But Grey tells me Thomas has not the faintest idea of cleaning plate, and he is very awkward in waiting at table, and though his knowledge of the map of the world is really wonderful, he is not yet instructed in the map of the wine cellar. Mrs. Watkins too is an admirable cook——'

'Admirable,' we all chimed in.

'But I assure you,' said Lady Lloyd, 'her philology and mathematics would be found in a most unsatisfactory state. And moreover Annette has such a knowledge of French, that I cannot for a moment doubt when the marks were added up, that Mrs. Watkins would be set to dress my hair, and Annette to dress our dinner, both of which arrangements would fill me with great uneasiness.'

We all exclaimed, and protested fervently against

anything which might have the effect of dethroning Mrs. Watkins.'

'I assure you,' continued Lady Lloyd, 'that when Cordelia suggested her idea, I went carefully over the changes which would probably be made. The Doctor was good enough to help me, and we found, it was probable, according to the usual value of the marks, that Haverstone the gardener would be made coachman, that the stable boy, who is very quick in arithmetic, would wait at table, and that the kitchen maid, who is a clever girl, and has even learnt a little Latin from her father, the schoolmaster at Penrhyn, would beat Mrs. Alsop utterly, and be installed in the housekeeper's room. Now I am far from saying, that all this would not be more equitable than the present state of things; but just now it would make me nervous.'

'Indeed,' I said, 'it is enough to make all of us nervous; and especially if we are to be included in the examination. My own dates are in frightful confusion; my theory of the Semitic languages is most unsettled. And my chemistry, botany, astronomy, philology, and indeed all the other *ologies* in general, would disperse like a mob of boys before the police, when I found myself sitting at the green table with the question paper before me. I doubt whether, in the readjustment of offices, I should not be relegated to clean shoes, which I have never done since I was a

fag at Winchester, and so have quite forgotten how to do it.'

Mrs. Beaumont once more looked at me grievingly and reprovingly. But she said nothing. And as it seemed therefore decided that we should be permitted to escape from this alarming ordeal, we began to breathe more freely.

A pause followed, such as usually does occur when persons have been relieved for the moment from some impending calamity, and yet still feel themselves to be in a critical position, but the door opened and Grey appeared with the letters. As Lady Lloyd was reading hers, she exclaimed,

'Only think! how delightful! Who do you suppose is coming to-morrow? Lady Livingham! she is on her way to the north, and proposes to take Brooklyn in her way.'

The news gave universal satisfaction, Lady Livingham being a charming person full of intellect, and the Lady Bountiful of a large parish and estate. We congratulated ourselves on the acquisition to the party, and were planning how we should amuse ourselves and her during the visit; when all at once it flashed across my mind—How about the pills? It would be impossible to avoid admitting her into our benevolent councils, and it might be necessary to make her a participator in the pills themselves.

Lady Lloyd was going to her room to write her

answer, accepting the proposed visit, when I followed her.

'Stop, I entreat you,' I said, 'stop one moment before you write. Have you thought of the consequences?'

'What consequences?' asked Lady Lloyd, with surprise.

'I mean,' I said, 'if Lady Livingham comes, about the pills?'

'But,' said Lady Lloyd, 'she will enjoy them of all things. Her whole soul is in kind acts. She has such schools, such blanket societies, and penny clubs, and her dispensary, Mr. Bolus assured me, is a perfect model, wonderful!'

'Yes,' I said, and groaned at the thought, 'it is that horrible dispensary which appals me. Her whole soul is in her medicine chest. If she comes we may be obliged to give her one pill; and if we do, she will give us all in return a dozen, not to mention draughts. It is her great hobby, you know, to physic her neighbours. She has always some panacea for preventing the plague, or guarding against fever. And be assured if she hears of the pill, the first resolve of her heart will be to drench us all.'

'I never thought of that,' said Lady Lloyd.

'Think of it now,' I said imploringly, 'before it is too late. In some way or another, I entreat you, postpone the visit. Do you know what her nostrum

is at present? Last year it was the water treatment. The year before it was the homœopathic system. Not three months ago she put her village school under a course of calomel, and salivated the whole parish. Now I know for certain that her panacea for all ills is cod liver oil, half a tumbler to be swallowed three times a day. An old man in the parish with a wooden leg tumbled down and broke it, and she insisted at once on his being put into bed and taking it.'

'Cod liver oil,' faintly screamed Lady Lloyd, 'what a nasty idea!'

'Yes,' I said, 'and we shall never escape it, half a tumbler before breakfast, another at twelve o'clock, and another on going to bed, instead of wine and water.'

'Horrible!' said Lady Lloyd.

'Most horrible!' I continued; 'I think I see the tumblers conveyed to our mouths, and emptied down our throats by invisible hands; brought to the bedside in the morning before we are up; a whole tray of glasses full of this abomination gliding through the air into the drawing-room with the supper tray, and dispersing themselves in mysterious silence to every one of our mouths, as the clock strikes ten. Spare us, I implore you! Save us! Nothing is so pertinaciously cruel as an amateur doctor, especially a female doctor.'

'But how can we put her off?' said Lady Lloyd.

'Well,' I said, 'there are several modes of doing this, but I scarcely like to suggest them. Scarlatina in the village would only tempt her to come and nurse you; and for your own sakes you cannot adopt the mode of putting off a *mal-apropos* visit which we read of now and then—setting fire to the house. But have you not some relation at a distance, whom you might kill, or make alarmingly ill? Or could you procure some friend in London to send her a telegraphic message recalling her home?'

Lady Lloyd looked at me with some degree of uneasiness. She was a very simple, truthful person, and like myself, till she came to be acquainted with the Fairy, and by taking the pill had had her mind enlarged to more liberal views, she had the greatest scruples against ever using the slightest fib.

'Well,' she said, though with rather a hesitation, 'I think I can manage it. I have written to the Norrises to invite them to dine and sleep. I know they will not come. But it will be quite true to say that I have invited them, and therefore must decline Lady Livingham. She will suppose I have no room for her.'

We did not look at each other. And I think we were both rather ashamed of ourselves.

The letter was despatched to prevent Lady Livingham from presenting herself at Brooklyn on her way to the north. And I undertook to communicate to Rosa Aberleigh, that she must be the next recipient

of the pill; and to implore her to relieve her aunt Mrs. Aberleigh, and all of us from our threatened appearance before the magistrates, by applying a most hearty wish that Mrs. Aberleigh's proceedings, and indeed the whole of the late proceedings, might be obliterated from the memory of man.

But the worries of the day were not over. To our consternation, we found that the repentant unwishing of the wish, though it had up to this time at once completely reversed all our proceedings—with the exception of Mr. Pritchard's suffering condition when he returned from his visit to the Esquimaux—had now still more fatally failed of its full effect. So it often happens. A first repentance does sometimes wholly set right again what our acts have set wrong, but a third and fourth repentance is, like a third and fourth cup of tea, necessarily much weaker. Mrs. Aberleigh's repentance had succeeded in transferring her safely from the inclined plane of the broken shutter, and the tumultuous trotting of her triumphant bearers, to the morning room at Brooklyn, but it had done little more. About three o'clock she was called out to relieve a large number of her poor pensioners, occupants of her new tenements, who came up with their crying children, entreating her to use her influence with Sir Lloyd to get their husbands out of jail; and hard was the language, and resentful were the denunciations, against the foolish person who had

given their husbands the means of getting drunk, and had brought them all into such trouble.

How Mrs. Aberleigh evaded the sympathy that was evidently expected from her, I do not know. A more fearlessly honest, truth-loving person could not exist. But the pills had placed her in a difficulty. She contrived, however, to listen to the lamentations of the poor women, and to relieve their wants, and at last to escape from their importunity, without betraying herself; and with no less presence of mind, she received visits from the members of neighbouring families: Mrs. Brooke, Lady Whitehead, Mr. Brown the rector, Mr. Studly the young curate, and a succession of others, who on hearing of the peril to which she had been exposed, came up to sympathise, and question her on the details of her adventure.

A third still heavier trial was a visit from poor Mrs. Flail, who appeared weeping and bemoaning herself, and asking for some laudanum drops. The baby, though gradually becoming weaker, was still furious, still obliged to be swathed up in its blanket, and corded round like a bale of wool whilst threatening every moment to break loose, and howling with a most sonorous voice to the disturbance of the whole neighbourhood. But Mrs. Flail communicated confidentially to Mrs. Aberleigh, under a promise of secresy, that she knew who it was that had bewitched poor little Tiny. It was old Betty Brocket, the lame

beggar woman, who had come last Thursday afternoon to beg at the farm, and having been sent away with only some cold potatoes, had been heard muttering to herself. And as Betty was very poor, very ugly, and generally speaking the most wretched helpless old creature in the neighbourhood, she was evidently in league with supernatural powers, and had wreaked her revenge for the hardness of Mrs. Flail's heart, and the coldness of her potatoes, by inflicting such marvellous strength on Mrs. Flail's innocent baby. But—Mrs. Flail triumphantly concluded—that very evening the farm-people intended to duck the old woman in the pond and then it would be all found out. For according to the popular dilemma, if she swam, she was clearly a witch, and, if she sank, and was drowned, why she was innocent; and there was an end of it. Mrs. Aberleigh listened in silence and terror, but still did not commit herself. But I rather think that, trusting to the Lethe wish, she took pains to persuade Mrs. Flail, and successfully also, to postpone the experiment of sinking or swimming till the next day, as more likely to be successful, because it was a Wednesday. Tuesdays she said were not favourable for the discovery of witches, though for what reason she did not think it necessary to explain. And Mrs. Flail believed her and complied.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS ROSA'S PILL.

In the meantime I had been, not indeed closeted with Rosa, but in confidential communication with her on the seat on the terrace, under the great wych-elm. I had sought her out, after my successful intercession with Lady Lloyd to ward from our devoted mouths the impending horror of Lady Livingham's oil. I found her on the rustic seat, with some sheets of music in her lap (she was passionately fond of music, and played with a masterly touch), but there was an expression of annoyance on her usually bright face, and I half fancied that I detected a lucidity about the eye-lids, which almost amounted to a tear. She was a charming girl; and we were always excellent friends. Besides knitting me some most capital comforters, she would play and sing to me, whenever I liked, and for as long a time. Together we had often sketched, together held rambling enthusiastic talk on the whole cycle of the fine arts, together read Wordsworth and Shakespeare, and together more

than once had indulged in little rhyming propensities of our own. I had inaugurated, as I well remember, her last new album with a sonnet to sunset, and had pictured in it the exquisite beauty of one of those glorious eves, when the whole west becomes a sea of amber, flowing into bays and estuaries, amidst islands of gold, and mountains of amethysts and rubies; and had indulged in the dream, with which all of us I imagine are familiar, of soaring up far above the mists and miseries of earth, and floating through the sapphire sky, pillowed upon a downy cloud, from whence in blessed repose we looked down with scorn upon the sombre earth, and sailed along in an ecstasy of tranquillity, amid the fairy land of ethereal nebulosity. The idea that she was distressed at some occurrence, softened my voice and manner into a sympathy which touched her heart. I hinted that I perceived she was not in her usual spirits.

'No,' she said; 'they have all worried me by coming to me in the most provoking way, and imploring me not to think of them to-morrow, for that they were quite happy enough already, and did not want any enjoyment whatever. As if,' she continued, 'I did not know how to use the pills. Certainly, I shall not run the risk of making poor people intoxicated, or carry off my acquaintances to Canada, without knowing whether they like to go. And I shall have nothing to do with politics,' she added.

'But perhaps,' a shade once more fell upon her face—'perhaps you also have come to ask me not to make you happy.'

I could not bear to add to her vexation, and though in my inmost heart the prayer had been concocted, I dexterously evaded the question, merely dwelling for a moment on the peril of contriving felicity for others, without previously ascertaining their tastes and inclinations.

'Yes,' she said—'this is the mistake which Mary made. I shall certainly confine myself to providing only what I know is liked.'

'You will not,' I said, 'forget the Lethe wish which will save Mrs. Aberleigh, and indeed all of us, from being brought up before the magistrate. Pray be particular in this, and order everything to be restored precisely to its former condition, especially whenever the well-being of any individual may have suffered—for I hear the rioters are still in jail, and that the baby continues violent.'

'Certainly,' she said, 'I shall do that; I should be very sorry to let any one know how extremely injudicious our attempts have been hitherto. But I must go. I have to look over some music. Oh! if we could but live in a world of music, in a world of art and harmony, beauty and poetry, and not of poverty and politics! would it not be delicious?'

'Delicious, indeed!' I said.

'Ah!' she replied, and archly smiled one of her prettiest smiles, and laid her finger on her lips. And so we parted.

Sir Lloyd was engaged all the afternoon with neighbouring magistrates, who came to consult on the riot, and the punishment of the offenders. I am sure his honest nature suffered much during the discussion. Nor would he, I do believe, have hesitated at once to declare all that he knew about it; but the certainty that the Lethe wish next morning would set everything right, seemed to justify him in saying nothing for the present. Several of the magistrates stayed to dinner, and occupied the conversation with invectives against the offender, who had given the poor their beer and their money. One of them especially, who sat next Mrs. Aberleigh, entertained her the whole evening with stories of the ingenuity of the police, in detecting the authors of offences, even with the slightest clue. She listened, and assented with as much calmness and composure as she could muster. But it was not pleasant. And the sidelong glances which we cast from time to time at each other, as some home-thrust touched our consciences to the quick, revealed a state of mind eminently disagreeable. But all things come to an end, at least here in this life; and the magistrates at last retired, and, with heavy hearts and anxious thoughts, we parted for the night. I remarked once more, that nearly every member

of the family—I think I may say every one—but the child Emma, as he or she took leave of Rosa, whispered or looked, or made some sign, which I could easily translate into the words, 'Spare me; leave me in my misery—anything, but try to make me happy.'

As I shook hands with her myself, she held up a slip of paper, with apparently a number of titles of books or music on it, and said hurriedly, 'It is Mozart, is it not, you like best—not Haydn?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I delight in Mozart. But you know also that I am fond of Italian music; anything but English and Scotch ballads.'

'Oh yes,' she said; 'I do not forget. I never forget those who have confidence in me.'

I fell asleep that night, repeating to myself (there is always a pleasure in repeating one's own verses) my Sonnet to Sunset, and after confused dreams, in which the 365 islands of the lake at Pennicocoshetag, the Fairy and the Merionethshire giant, Lady Shropshire and the baby—which was a stuffed bear—made a formidable hodge-podge, I was awakened by Wyatt, my servant, entering the room, as usual, with the hot water.

His regular salutation was 'Seven o'clock, sir!' But, to my infinite surprise, instead of addressing me in his ordinary quiet, respectful tone, he stationed himself at the bottom of my bed, laid his hand upon his breast, as the first or second gentleman lover does

in an opera, when he falls in love with the audience (for to the audience he always turns and addresses himself), and then I observed that the said hand was delicately enveloped in a white kid glove, and that the place on which it was laid, and where his heart was supposed to reside, was equally decorated with a white waistcoat and a gold chain, while the other hand held a sheet of music. And his face also, instead of its usual smoothness, presented the luxuriant black beard, whiskers, and moustache, which seem so favourable to the development of the voice, and such necessary appendages to an opera singer.

The poor man seemed at first unconscious of the transmutation which had taken place in his outward appearance. But he had no sooner commenced his usual announcement, 'Seven o'clock, sir!' when, to his amazement and evident consternation, his voice broke forth into such a profusion and exuberance of quiverings and quaverings, trillings and roulades, such risings and sinkings, such convolutions and contortions, such conglomerations and precipitations of sound, that I sank back on my pillow in perfect wonder.

I recognised some faint traces of an air in the opera of 'Don Giovanni,' which Rosa often used to play to me, and which, as a simple melody, always gave me pleasure. But the melody was here like the needle in the haystack, or Tarpeia buried under the

soldiers' bucklers. I tried to catch it, but the moment I thought I had caught it, it was lost in a variation. The pursuit was like the hunting of a flea—the tune was so very small, and hopped about with such rapidity, never stopping for a moment in one place. I happen also, in respect to music, to have a singular dislike to hearing, and still more to seeing, a man sing by himself. The only occasion, when I can recall such an event with pleasure, was one evening at a friend's house, when, after rather a formal dinner, and dull dessert, the evening seemed setting in with more than its usual severity of pauses and stiffness, to the evident distress of the host and hostess; and as cards were proscribed, some one ventured to hint at music. There was a piano, but no lady to play; there were music books, but none of any use. At last one most good-natured gentleman, really a good singer, with a very deep voice, proposed, as the only contribution he could make to the amusement of the evening, to sing by himself, without accompaniment, the bass part in one of Handel's choruses, which he accordingly did. And there was such simple good nature in offering all that he could, that I listened to him with even more satisfaction, I do not say pleasure, than I should have done to the whole chorus at a Handel Festival.

Poor Wyatt's case, however, was far different. It was evidently no benevolent sacrifice of himself to

please me; but a necessity, a compulsion from without. And I was at first so astonished, that I could not tell him to be quiet, but sat up in my bed, looking at him with my eyes wide open, and—what, as I have already told you, I never should do, except when overtaken by a great surprise—with my night-cap on. Wyatt proceeded, though with evident terror to himself, to rush up and down, and round and round, through all the notes in the gamut, till at last, from a portentous burst which made me stop my ears, he sank down into such a deep hollow abyss of bass notes, that I expected to see him gurgle and disappear down his own throat.

On the libretto, or words of his song, it is needless to dwell. Being in English, and not in Italian, it was deficient in sublimity and pathos by a multitude of *l's* and *r's*, *inas* and *ellas*, *ettis* and *osos*. But in appropriateness, it was far superior, and in depth of thought and truthfulness of meaning, fully equal to, much in Italian operas. And its simplicity might be described, by a theatrical critic, as even touching.

'Seven, seven, seven, o'clock, sir—se-e-even o'clock, clock, clock, sir—clock, sir—clock, sir—seven o'clock, sir sir-ir, sir. Seven o'clock, sir, clo-o-ock, sir—o'clock, sir—seven o'clock, sir.'

The variations and repetitions upon this simple theme, the emphatic outbursts on the *o*, the pathetic

modulations on the *o-o-ock*, and the solemn intonation of the final, *sir*, were given with a masterly knowledge of the human heart, and doubtless, had they been heard on the stage in the Haymarket, instead of at the bottom of my bed, they would have produced a thrilling effect, and I might even have been tempted to give poor Wyatt my ring or offer him a bouquet. But I was breathless with amazement.

At last I found means to exclaim, or at least to attempt to exclaim—

'Wyatt, what is the matter with you?'

But, to my dismay and consternation, I found my own voice running off, without the possibility of controlling it, into similar marvellous and most artistic vagaries. I discovered then—what no one had ever suspected before—that I was endowed with a most rare and magnificent high tenor voice, and my words, 'Wyatt, what is the matter with you?' fell naturally (that is to say, at least, quite as naturally as such things occur in an opera) into a duet with Wyatt—a duet which I recognised as an old favourite air of mine from the 'Semiramide.'

Wyatt, whose terror was evidently not diminished by my harmonious and co-operating paroxysm, and who believed us to be both possessed together, was nevertheless constrained to break forth himself into another grand display of 'Seven o'clock, sir; seven o'clock, sir!' into which I interwove most elaborately, and with a most exuberant spontaneity, the embroidery

of my own question, 'Wyatt, what is the matter with you?' So that our dialogue, to a by-stander, would have taken the genuine colloquial form in which operatic personages communicate to each other their difficulties and hopes, their joy and grief, their love and hate, after something of the following pattern :—

Wyatt, Wy-y-y-y-att, Wyatt—seven, seven, seven—what, what—o'clock, o'clock, sir—Wy-y-y-att—sir, sir, irr, ir, r, r, r, clo-o-o-o-ock, clock, sir—matter, matter, m-a-a-at-ter—sir, sir, sir ; until, after ringing an infinity of changes, each on our respective theme, and each in our very different frame of mind, we seemed both to rise and sink into final accordance; and in one harmonious close, myself of indignation, and poor Wyatt of terror, we concluded in a long pathetic quaver, he his announcement of the hour, and myself my enquiry as to his sanity.

We took breath, and he was about to speak again. And I caught the first bass notes of one of the most beautiful airs from the 'Acis and Galatea,' set to Wyatt's own words.

'Oh, sir, I'm bewitched, bewitched, bewi-i-i-itched, bewitched, bewi-i-i-i-itched, bewitched, bewitched—'

But before he could proceed farther, I slipped on my dressing-gown, jumped out of bed, put the pillow to his mouth, and pushed him out of the room, without allowing him to complete his *bravura*, or venturing to speak myself. What had occurred I could not doubt. Rosa knew I was fond of music,

that I never went to operas, rarely to concerts, and that I had heard few first-rate singers; and she had resolved to provide me this treat. The attention was touching. But she had made one mistake. My ear was singularly unformed, my taste extremely simple, my knowledge of music as a science absolutely *nil*; I had not the slightest wish to sing myself; and though I enjoyed little airs and melodies on a piano, I had, as I before said, a horror of opera singers, and a special aversion to that class of voice which Rosa had selected for me—a high tenor; a bass I should not so much have minded; it would have seemed more natural. But to be forced into roulades with a voice which became at times a *falsetto*, provoked me past endurance. To what amount of music I was to be condemned I knew not—as no persons do know when they fall into a musical family. And I tried to mutter something to myself, to see if I still lay under the spell; but found myself again bursting forth into the celebrated *buffa* song, 'Figaro, Figaro,' which was the more irritating in my present state of mind, from its vivacity and hilarity and self-satisfactoriness.

I was proceeding to deliver this, with such a powerful voice, that I expected the whole establishment would come rushing to the door to enquire of me, probably in a grand chorus, as I had enquired myself of Wyatt, what was the matter? but I managed to stuff a towel into my mouth, and stop the song,

which seemed endeavouring to gurgle forth, notwithstanding, like water from the mouth of an inverted bottle. And having dressed myself as rapidly as I could, under such circumstances, I went down stairs, hoping to catch Rosa at once, and implore her to release me.

The moment I opened the door of the library, in which we generally met before breakfast, I heard a burst of music—the grand hunters' chorus from 'Der Freischutz'—another favourite air of mine, and which certainly was given with wonderful spirit and harmony. It is, you know, of a very cheerful and jovial character, almost amounting to jollity, and betokening minds full of delight in their employment. The performers consisted of the whole party, with the exception of Sir Lloyd, and with the addition of Mr. Gray, the butler. The music, as I have said, was Weber's famous chorus; the words were their own, and very simple :—

'Good morning! How d' you do? Breakfast is ready.'

As I appeared at the door, the whole party, so I afterwards found, had been seized by some invisible hand, and ranged round in a circle, and while looking each other full in the face, with an aspect of the utmost surprise, indignation, and alarm, had been compelled to join in the song :—

'Good morning—good morning—good morning—

how do you do—how do-o-you do—good mor-or-or-ning—morning—how do you do—you do—how do-o-o-o you do—how—ow ow ow—do you do—do you do? Good morning—good morning—how do you do?' In the meantime, Mr. Gray, to the same melody, and throwing himself with heartiness in his voice, but terror in his face, into the chorus, was repeating his information that breakfast was ready. 'Breakfast is ready—rea-ea-eady—breakfast is ready—bre-ea-ea-eak-fast—breakfast is ready—breakfast is ready.' The joyous vigour of his singing, and the alarm on his countenance, were in striking contrast.

Only one person looked on, smiling, approving, and beating time with her glove on the table, like a conductor. It was Rosa. But, alas! her triumph soon gave way before the aspects she encountered, especially from poor Mr. Heathorn, Mrs. Beaumont, and the Doctor, of whom it happened that scarcely one had the slightest taste for music, or knew Weber from Mozart, Mendelssohn from Verdi, while the philosopher, Mr. Heathorn, I knew, felt the most inconceivable disdain for the whole tribe of *inis* and *ettis* who people the Italian Opera. To listen to music was a sufficient bore; but to be compelled to sing himself—to sing jovially, to sing in chorus, to shake, and quaver, and pirouette with his own throat, was an intolerable degradation. And yet they were all fixed to the spot, and forced to trill forth their

songs in a sportive, cheerful, jovial way, as if they were enjoying it. They absolutely scowled on Rosa, whose face at last subsided from extreme pleasure into evident annoyance. And when at length the chorus ceased, she was about to say something, of which I caught only the first notes—

'I thought you would like it so much.' But as she began to soar and flourish off into a most labyrinthine cavatina from Rossini's 'Guillaume Tell,' the whole party ran to her, put their hands, some to her mouth, and some to their own ears, and I had only time to motion Mr. Gray out of the room, to prevent his witnessing a burst of tears from the poor girl, and also hearing a quartette and chorus, from I know not what celebrated opera. For every word from each mouth fell spontaneously into some concerted piece of music, in which all the party, though with different feelings, some imploring—others remonstrating, warning, threatening—yet joined harmoniously, beating time, and expressing their hatred of their occupation, and their desire to be delivered at once from any more music.

Rosa, however, like some other young ladies, had a will of her own. She felt strongly that to such persons she was charged with a mission; that a man who has not music in his soul, is fit not only for 'stratagems and murders,' but for that which, in the opinion of some minds, is infinitely worse—for nothing at all. I felt sure that she was saying to herself, 'If they do

not like music, they ought to like it; and the only way to make them like it is to give them enough of it.' And with this idea of education, I saw there was no more hope of inducing her to unwish her wish, than of persuading Lady Lloyd to wish us back from Pennicocosheetag, until we had seen the beautiful view, and she had visited her friends.

I tried, therefore, to quiet the feelings of the party; shut the door, when Mr. Gray had retired; and putting my finger to my lips, I nodded, and made signs that we should all come to breakfast without speaking. If we spoke, I knew we should begin to sing; and if we sang any more, I knew where the singing would end. In fact, to speak generally, I found that the Fairy's gift had not been conducive to the harmony of our minds, whatever it had done for our voices; and that from being the most amiable and affectionate of friends, we risked every day a deadly quarrel. As we passed through the hall to the breakfast-room, Gray met me, and I put my hand up to his mouth, but in vain. I could not prevent his delivering his message, which he did to the music of a recitative from Handel's oratorio of 'Samson.' It was a request from Sir Lloyd—who had a headache, and was not getting up—that we would send away the German band, which, he said, was playing under his window. The supposed band had begun its performance as soon as our voices ceased, though, being at a little distance,

we had not particularly noticed it. It took Gray some time to deliver this message, to which I was obliged to listen patiently, though, after hearing it once, I was not interested by its being repeated a dozen or twenty times. But he had to run the changes from high to low on all the syllables of each word—to dwell especially on the emphatic 'as,' and the pathetic 'the,' so that Rosa came up, and heard the message before it was delivered for the twentieth and last time. I gave her a pencil and a bit of paper, made signs that she should write what she wished to say, and thus found there was no German band to dismiss; but as she knew I was very fond of good orchestral music, she had given a general order that the finest band which had ever been heard, should perform for my benefit during the morning; adding to this a desire that every sound which caught my ear should be musical and harmonious. These rather vague directions had been carried out by the Fairies, according to their own ideas of what was best; and now, Norbury Brook, the little stream which ran under the bank, instead of the irregular bubblings, the unscientific tinklings and plashings, brawlings and murmurings, with which, like a rude uneducated streamlet, it was in the habit of solacing our rustic ears, was beginning a performance, for my benefit, of the overture to 'Semiramide,' Beethoven's 'Grand Pastoral Symphony,' and other choice selections from the

finest composers. The effect was, as Rosa had ordered it to be, very fine, and equal to that of a dozen bands in the Crystal Palace, so that poor Sir Lloyd had but little chance of escaping from the infliction.

I could not help looking at Rosa sadly and reproachfully. But she made signs to me to come out on the terrace, and listen, and certainly the music was very beautiful. Only, unhappily, my own mind was not in an equally beautiful state. And the jarring of so much melody and harmony without, on so much of discord and annoyance within, produced considerable disturbance in my equanimity. I could not help shaking my head with a sigh, as I led her back to the breakfast-room. Here Gray, still with a most perturbed face, had just brought in the silver tea-kettle. No sooner did I appear, than the kettle broke forth into Rossini's charming air of 'Di Piacer,' with such trilling and florid accompaniments of modulation, that Mr. Heathorn, who was just then trying to soothe his irritated feelings by making some scientific calculation in his head, jumped up and left the room; the Doctor put his arms upon the table, and stopped his ears; and Lady Lloyd emphatically gave a sign that the offending kettle should be removed, to finish its song in the solitude of Mr. Gray's pantry; and it was accordingly carried off, Gray himself nearly dropping it in his alarm. We sat looking at each other significantly; and those of us who had hard and

revengeful hearts, cast sidelong glances upon poor Rosa, who, however, continued to be steeled, in the conscientious conviction, that however distasteful the discipline might be, she was really giving us a luxury, which we were bound to enjoy. We sat silent, eating our breakfast in a manner very unsocial, and very unlike our usual cheerful chat. Mrs. Heathorn went out and brought back Mr. Heathorn, and I observed that his ears were plugged with cotton. And by signs I enjoined, as well as I could, that not a soul should speak; for I felt sure that to ask for salt would produce a cavatina, and the offer of an egg involve us in a duet. My only hope was that Rosa had limited the time of our trial. Two hours, I had once heard her say, were enough for any concert. And I knew she must have other delights in store, to which I trusted the remainder of the day would be devoted. It was now half-past nine. If we could only maintain silence till eleven, we might be then released from the spell. Unhappily, we could not command privacy. We had scarcely reached our second cup of tea, when the door opened, and Mr. Gray again appeared, and with the deepest bass voice, to the music of Handel's 'Angels, ever bright and fair,' announced 'Mr. Brown, my lady. Mi-i-is-ter Brown—Mr. Brown—my lady —Brow-ow-own—my lady!' But I need not set the words at greater length to that beautiful air. It detained Gray some time at the door, which, after

glancing at Lady Lloyd for permission, I rose and shut, fearing lest Mr. Brown, who, as I think I have already said, was the rector of Rayadil, should become aware of this unusual mode of announcing his arrival, and should find himself compelled to sing, instead of speak, his wishes. The musical treat, I was already aware, was only intended for myself; and therefore, unless I could hear the sounds, the involuntary concert might be avoided; though, if once it began, it might be heard by all who were within reach of it; and the song or piece once commenced, continued, I found, to the end, under all circumstances. I made signs to Lady Lloyd that I would leave the room; but I had scarcely re-opened the door, when Mr. Brown was seen approaching. In great alarm, I made signs, entreating him to stop, shaking my head at the same time, pointing to my ears and throat, and then delivering to Gray a twisted note, on which I had merely written the words, 'Pray be quiet! What do you want?' Gray, as frightened as myself, gave it in silence to the amazed Rector, who, most happily, seemed to understand that silence was essential, and wrote back—

'What is the matter? Any serious illness? I trust not. I merely wished to speak to Sir Lloyd about a vestry meeting.'

Even in the midst of my present difficulty, I could not help feeling greatly relieved to find that, so far, we

might hope that the Lethe wish had been successful, and that there was no fear of our being summoned that day, at least, before the magistrates.

'Influenza,' I wrote in reply, 'violent influenza; frightfully infectious; lost our voices; cannot speak; stone deaf;' and as Mr. Brown, after reading the note, looked up with a countenance of sympathy, I waved my hand, and drew back as a sign that he had better not come near me.

Gray, in the meantime, had retired, and we were left to communicate alone. Mr. Brown again wrote a few words, but when he would have approached me I drew back still farther, motioned to him to lay the note on the hall table, and only when he had returned to his original position I advanced and read it. 'I am greatly distressed. Cannot I help you? Have you had medical advice?'

In answer I shook my head, tossed him a paper on which I had written: 'Mrs. Brown! think of Mrs. Brown and the children! pray go!' at the same time pointing out to him the road from the terrace through the grounds, and nodding a kind but sorrowful farewell; and though he retired with great perplexity, and often turned to look back, I at last succeeded in getting rid of him. It will perhaps be said that I was making great progress in telling fibs, but I consoled myself that I had only made signs, only written a few words which did not form a sentence; and I said to my conscience, that I had made no statement,

and therefore told no lie. Whether I had or not, I leave others to judge—only I am sure that any persons who have ever had any dealings with a fairy would confess that they made as rapid progress in the art of telling fibs as I did.

I could not bring myself to go back to the breakfast table. My only longing was to escape from the house, and especially from Norbury Brook, which was now playing Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony with such persevering accuracy of instrumentation, such zealous enthusiasm, and such perfect unconsciousness of the annoyance it was causing, that my temper fairly gave way before it, as the temper of the greatest mathematicians have ere this succumbed under the infliction of a barrel organ.

But the brook was not the only culprit. A couple of sparrows in the great yew tree were engaged in a duet from the 'Otello.' Four cows had assembled themselves under the stag-headed old oak, for a quartette from the 'Puritani.' And a large bumble bee, a cousin of the Fairy's footman, as he swept past me, was dolefully humming the Dead March in 'Saul.' I stopped my ears. Luckily I had had the toothache a few days before, and had some cotton wool in my pocket. And I then struck off through the plantations, and escaped on the high open ground of Cleves Hill, where I was out of the Brooklyn domain, and therefore, as I trusted, beyond the range of Rosa's musical treat.

CHAPTER XII.

ROSA'S REPENTANCE.

It was a bright, sunshiny, delicious day, the view of the valley and distant mountains most lovely, the sky a brilliant sapphire, only here and there a soft downy cloudlet floating along, and casting a pearly shadow on the wooded steep of Copley Warren or the old ruin of Appleton Castle. Beneath me lay a richly watered, richly cultivated plain. I breathed once more a calm and quiet. Rhymings came into my head, as they often do under such circumstances. My favourite sonnet to sunset, about floating on a downy cloud through an azure sky, recurred to my memory, and—I confess my weakness—I dwelt on it, and even meditated sending it to a magazine, and thought it beautiful; even as each mamma sees the lineaments of a cherub in the hobbydehoy features of her own young Caliban. I am not quite sure that, what with the warm sun, what with climbing the hill, what with the repose after annoyance, the delightful stillness and the softness of the thymy turf on which I sat,—I am

not quite sure, I say, that my head did not droop, and my eyes lapse into a half-dreamy state of dozing. From this, however, I was slowly recalled by a damp chill stealing over me. I struggled against it for a minute or two, without opening my eyes. But at last I became so cold, that I was thoroughly awakened.

I looked up. What was my surprise to find myself no longer in a brilliant sunshine, sitting on the green thymy turf, but in the midst of a dense black cold drizzling fog, which wetted me through and through in a few minutes! And, what was still more surprising and alarming, I was no longer sitting upon the turf, but lying at full length upon my back, apparently without anything to support me. I tried to move, to rise. But having nothing solid beneath me, no purchase whatever, it was impossible to stir. I looked above me. It was all fog—to my right hand, fog—to my left hand, fog—under me, fog—before me, fog—everything was fog; but fog of the densest, darkest, coldest, and wettest kind. Before I could recover from my surprise or collect my thoughts, I heard a faint scream, the cry of a female voice, evidently close to me; but the fog was so dense, that I could discern nothing.

'O where am I? Where am I?' the voice exclaimed, and I recognised Rosa's accents.

'Is that you?' I said.

'Yes,' was the answer; 'is that you?'

'Yes,' I said; 'where are you? Here am I.'

'O do come and help me,' she cried; 'I can't move.'

'And I cannot stir,' I said; 'there is nothing to rest upon. Do tell me where we are. What have you been wishing?'

'Oh!' she cried, 'it isn't my fault. I never wished this!'

'What did you wish?' I asked.

'Of course,' she said, 'you know what we have both wished twenty times—your verses will tell you what I wanted—your sonnet. I wished that we might be sailing about on a cloud, in a bright sky: I said nothing about a fog.'

'What!' I exclaimed in horror, 'do you really mean that we are up in the sky, with nothing but this fog to hold us up? What if it should disperse?'

'Ah!' she shrieked, 'the cloud is giving way. I can see down through it to the earth.'

'Frightful!' I exclaimed. 'Take care you do not slip off.'

'Are you cold?' she said.

'Very cold indeed,' I replied. 'And my rheumatism——'

'O,' she exclaimed, 'never mind your rheumatism. Now we are here, let us enjoy ourselves, if we can.'

'Enjoy ourselves!' I said; 'but I am shivering and

wet through, and I cannot stir. And what if we should tumble?'

'Oh, we shall not tumble, I am quite sure!' cried Rosa impatiently. 'But I want to look over. Cannot you try and look over the edge of the cloud? Lift yourself up and look over, and tell me how the earth looks.'

And at this moment a gust of icy-cold wind came, which swept away a portion of the fog, and I caught sight of the earth beneath me at a prodigious distance; but all the trees and houses, the hills, rivers, steeples and towns were so diminished, blurred and blotted by the driving mist, that it only reminded me of a policeman's face seen through a damp glass, or the smoke of the engine as you pass through a station in an express train on a November night.

I endeavoured to depict the impression which the view had made upon me, in a few faint shivering words, but it was impossible to persuade Rosa that a cloud was not like a very soft mattress, or a very firm feather bed, or the cushions of a drawing-room sofa, on the edge of which we might rest with the elbow in a Turkish attitude of repose, and gaze down upon the earth below, and up into the bright firmament above, with serene enjoyment. My own convictions in plain prose, whatever had been the dreams of my sonnet, were of a very different kind.

But, alas! I had been tempted into some rhymings,

where violets and islets, balm and calm, eve and grieve, peace and Greece, love and dove, all happened to tumble together into the kaleidoscope of a sonnet. And my kaleidoscope, like other delusions of the kind, had tempted a young lady, as so many young ladies are tempted, to a practical step, of which both of us now heartily repented.

'Oh,' exclaimed Rosa reproachfully, 'how could you write that sonnet? And you knew all the time what a cloud was!'

I could not help recriminating rather impatiently, for at that moment a violent twinge in my left shoulder brought before me the fearful vision of a rheumatic fever.

'How could you believe it?' I said angrily. And I am not sure that we were not on the verge of a quarrel. But happily she added:

'And yet they were beautiful verses.'

And as a poet, of course in a moment I felt all my resentment vanish, and asked her calmly and affectionately how long she intended us to stay there.

'Oh,' she said, 'I could only spare half an hour; for before one o'clock we must be back, for I have a treat for Sir Lloyd.'

'Poor Sir Lloyd!' I groaned. 'Could you not wish us back at once? Half an hour in a wet cloud is a dozen centuries for a man with the rheumatism;' for once more a sharp twinge ran through my left arm.

'But,' she said, 'I do so want to look over. I am sure we shall be able to do so by-and-by. Do you think we are moving?'

'Certainly,' I said; 'clouds move at a great rate. We may be somewhere in Russia by this time.'

'Oh,' she shrieked, 'I hope we are not over the sea.'

'Well,' I said, 'I do not think it matters much—if we tumble—whether we are over the sea or over the land. Perhaps the sea will be the softer.'

'I do not think we shall fall,' she said; 'do you?'

'Well,' I replied, 'I am holding on to the fog as firmly as I can, but I do not know!'

At that moment a faint rumble reached our ears, and an alarming thought came across me.

'I do trust,' I said, 'when you gave your orders about the cloud, you specified that there was to be no thunder and lightning in it. What is that noise? Hark! again.'

'Ah!' she screamed, 'how you frighten me!'

'Well,' I said, 'I should not like to find myself reposing—if such an uncomfortable posture as mine is can be called reposing—upon a bed of Congreve rockets and Catherine wheels with a chance of spontaneous combustion. And a cloud may be all this.'

'Oh! do not talk so horridly!' cried Rose; 'I never thought about the thunder and lightning. I wonder'

—and she paused for a moment—'whether any persons in the world were ever before in such a position.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I think great numbers. Nothing is more common than for people crawling on a low level of society to look up with envy to others whom they imagine to be floating calmly above them through a bright azure sky upon velvet cushions, and to long to be in their place. And then sometimes'—I was on the point of saying 'a wicked fairy,' but happily checked myself in time, considering where I was, at such a height from the ground, and perhaps in whose hands and hearing—'no,' I continued, 'a benevolent, beautiful, and virtuous fairy'—and I repeated the words twice, loudly and distinctly, that they might be heard and reported—'a benevolent, beautiful, and elegant fairy' (this second time I altered the 'virtuous,' thinking 'elegant' was more complimentary) 'gratifies their wish, and they find out that the velvet cushions and azure sky are nothing but a fog in an icehouse, and loaded perhaps with a thunderstorm.'

'Oh!' said Rosa, 'I wish you would not moralise. You are always moralising.'

She said 'always,' for irritability of the nervous system is gifted with wonderfully rapid powers of generalisation.

'I confess,' I said, 'there are occasions when one

needs all one's philosophy to comfort one. And I am so cold and wet! Are you?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I am not merely damp, I am wet through and through.'

'Oh, Rosa,' I said sorrowfully, 'can you not wish us back again at once, without waiting for the half hour?'

'No!' she said, 'indeed I cannot; for I have set my heart on doing something for Sir Lloyd which will please him.'

'But my rheumatism,' I persisted. 'I am sure to have a rheumatic fever to-morrow.' And I groaned heavily as another twinge ran down my leg.

'Bear it patiently,' she replied. 'There is nothing so good for us as opportunities of practising resignation, and giving up our own will to others. Self-sacrifice is so noble, so heroic!' And she proceeded at some length to dilate on the merit of self-sacrifice, a branch of ethics which I confess, to my own temperament, is rather irritating, when the lesson is urged on us by the persons who have placed us under the necessity of practising it. I fear in my reply there was a certain huskiness of voice and sharpness of accentuation, which provoked from Rosa a rejoinder with still greater huskiness and still sharper accentuation. She was a most amiable girl; but finding that she had made a mistake, and caused us both to be wet through in a cold fog, instead of giving

us a luxurious sail through a warm sky on a velvet cushion, she did what most human beings do under similar circumstances, and avenged herself for her own blunder by endeavouring to sting me on a tender point.

Now my great forte, I know, is philosophy. I pride myself, to speak honestly yet modestly, on my metaphysics. Others, I know—envious and jealous minds—call it my weak point; but I know that it is my strong one; and some day or other after I am gone, the world will do me justice. I am therefore particularly sensitive to any criticism on this point. And Rosa knew this, and aimed a sarcasm at metaphysical philosophers, who ought never to feel themselves out of their element when up in the clouds.

I took fire, and retorted with a severe remark on young ladies with a passion for music and æsthetics. A recrimination followed from her upon poetry in general, and especially a contemptuous allusion to some verses of my own, in which I had been tempted by extreme necessity to an irregular rhyme. This was 'the unkindest cut of all,' and incapable of containing myself any longer, I made a spiteful criticism on the taste of her last new bonnet, which extorted from her a malicious suggestion, that I should buy a new hat. And no one can say to what extremities we might have proceeded, but we were suddenly

recalled to more personal considerations, by finding ourselves rapidly descending to the earth, in a thick shower of snow, into which the cloud was dissolving, like the extravasation of a feather bed. The cold was so intense that I became numb and torpid, and by what magic I safely reached the earth I do not know, only the first symptoms of returning sensibility found me in my own room at Brooklyn, and the clock in the stable yard striking half-past one. I was wet through and through, dripping, frozen, almost stiff, with rheumatic aches shooting through every limb ; but I rang my bell, made Wyatt bring me hot brandy and water, put on some dry attire, and was consoling myself that I at least was safe from any more infliction of enjoyment upon me for that day —since poor Sir Lloyd was to be the next victim— when Rosa's little maid tapped at my door, and brought me a three-cornered note on rose-coloured paper, and a moss rose from her mistress. The note was so prettily written, there was such anxiety about my rheumatism, such sorrow for 'the stupid blunder' about the clouds, such petitions for forgiveness, and such a pressing petition that I would come and help her in the treat she was preparing for Sir Lloyd, followed by another phrase, three times underlined, and borrowed from my Ode to the Cuckoo, and placed between inverted commas as an acknowledgment of the loan, that I could not resist. What poet can resist a quota-

tion from his own verses, which proves that they are as household words familiar to the hearts of others? And so I put on my great coat and goloshes, and limped down to the pleasure-ground, where my presence and cooperation were craved.

Now I have before said that Rosa had what is called a green and gushing soul, overflowing with passion for every kind of artistic beauty, from the Elgin marbles to Messrs. Minton's Parian statuettes; from the Vatican to the South Kensington Museum; from Shakespeare to Tennyson; from the landscapes of a Claude to the arrangement of a riband flower bed; and in the above-mentioned pleasure-ground, as I have already described when narrating our pleasant tea-drinking with the poor people by the pond, there was a spring of purest water, which Sir Lloyd had enclosed in a circular well of brick, divested of any embellishment. And often and often had Rosa and myself, when strolling among the rhododendra by the pond, expatiated on the desirableness of duly picturesquing it with roots and rockwork, creepers and moss. We had talked also of cutting down a tree or two, to open a view of the church tower, besides widening the path, reducing some zigzags, and otherwise improving the natural capabilities of the spot. Rosa had framed an idea, in her own mind, of what it ought to be. She was sure that it would improve the grounds—sure that Sir Lloyd would admire and be

grateful—sure at least that he ought to admire. And she had accordingly taken advantage of her fourth draft on the Fairy's omnipotence to order a profusion of grotesque rockwork, distorted trunks, monster roots, ivy, moss, creepers, and ferns, with which she proposed to decorate the well herself—for she did not like to entrust such a work to any but her own hands. On reaching the well, I found her wishes had been obeyed: the grass was piled with waggon loads of materials for picturesquing the obnoxious brickwork; and the Fairies had also ordered to the spot some of their own labourers—stout and athletic—in fact, young giants, whom I should have mistaken for English navvies on a railroad, except from their size, and that their smock frocks were of course not white, or what once had been white, but green. In a minute the brickwork was dismantled, the formal circle broken up, the bank piled with rocks, and skilfully wrought, under Rosa's presiding genius, into little caverns and ravines, peaks and precipices, cliffs and gorges. The cavities were enriched with mould, ivy was twined over the fangs and excrescences of the roots, this slope bedded with moss, and that crag feathered with fern. And in the meanwhile some of the sturdy labourers had been cutting down the trees required to open the view—widening the walk, which was in fact scarcely more than a duck-path—and mitigating the asperities of the zigzags, on which previously one foot rested

upon a zig, as Sir Uvedale Price expresses it, while the other set itself on zag. It was certainly very pretty, and as Rosa and I lifted ourselves up from our stooping posture to survey the work, we smiled with mutual congratulation. But in the meantime something had been done, to which, in the interest of the employment and the fervour of our poetical fancy, we had paid no attention. The water, when we found it, was of the purest crystal, pellucid as a diamond. It was now turned black as ink. What with the demolition of the brickwork, the crumbling in of the bank, the puddling of the sides, the disturbance of the bottom, the dirt from the rockwork and the roots, and, not least, from the immersion of the young giants' hands, which proved that even in Fairy Land there was a class of spirits entitled to the name of the 'Great Unwashed,' the crystal well was now little more than a mass of liquid mud. This, however, we knew would rectify itself in time. Unhappily, before that time had elapsed, before our work was completed, at the blackest moment of the transaction, we heard steps approaching through the shrubbery; and Rosa, looking up, exclaimed with unfeigned dismay and disappointment, 'Oh dear, how vexatious! Here is Sir Lloyd come before we have finished!'

I also raised my eyes from a great contorted root which I was carefully settling into its place between two rough masses of crag; and there was Sir Lloyd

standing, and gazing upon us, with a look of such intense annoyance that all my enthusiasm of æstheticism, all my visions of the picturesque, vanished in a moment, under a sudden chill of shame and remorse. All at once there seemed revealed to me a fact, which in the luxury of our artistic labours had entirely escaped us—for very overpowering love of art does sometimes affect and dull the memory, as it makes collectors of books forget to return rare volumes, and amateurs of medals or minerals put by mistake choice specimens into their own pockets. We had been meddling with the property of another, without his consent. Sir Lloyd, as I said, stood looking at us silently, though with an evident feeling of the deepest vexation. And we stood also. But I, for my part, did not venture to look up. A schoolboy caught out of bounds, and pilfering apples in a neighbour's orchard, seemed the nearest approach to my condition. And my hair was grey. I was between fifty and sixty!

Rosa at last took courage (women in such a crisis are always more self-possessed than men), and she ventured to ask for some approbation of the work.

'Is it not pretty?' she said—'much prettier than that horrid brickwork? And it was all done to please you. Only, unhappily, you came too soon. Oh, why did you not stay till we had finished?' And Rosa—already emboldened by recovering her voice—was

evidently meditating a grand strategical manœuvre—to turn round upon Sir Lloyd and reproach him, instead of being reproached herself: a manœuvre which naturally startles the injured party, and often has the effect of entirely silencing him.

'My dear Rosa,' said Sir Lloyd, 'I am very much obliged by your kind intentions. But are you aware what you have done?'

'What?' asked Rosa faintly, with no little alarm, for she read some serious mischief in Sir Lloyd's voice.

'Are you aware,' said Sir Lloyd, 'that all the water we have to drink in the house and at the farm is supplied from this well—that the pipes are full of valves, of very delicate construction—that any deposit from muddy water will require them all to be opened and cleaned at a great expense—and that you have poisoned all the water in our cisterns, leaving us for at least a week without any to drink?'

'Oh dear!' cried Rosa, 'I am so sorry! I am so very sorry!'

My own eyes continued fixed on the ground. And I shall never forget the disgust at my labours which I felt, when a young giant, who did not understand what was passing, came up, and asked for instructions where to fix the next great root and rock.

Sir Lloyd looked at me a moment, but turned away, and as he did so, he caught sight of the newly

opened view through the wood, where the trees had been cut down, and the wriggles of the duckpath, reduced to graceful and dignified undulations. 'Oh! Rosa!' he exclaimed in a tone of really exquisite pain, 'you have cut down those trees—my mother's trees—which she planted herself for me. I would rather have parted with all the oaks in the park.'

Once more Rosa's heart quaked within her, but she assumed courage to say: 'Oh, Sir Lloyd, they were only two stunted wych elms and a pollard poplar.'

Sir Lloyd said nothing, but his eye turned to the walk. 'And the walk gone too, Rosa! If you knew how I prized that walk!'

'But it was so ugly!' faltered Rosa.

'Yes,' said Sir Lloyd, 'but a very ugly thing may be very precious for the sake of those we love. It was in that walk—' He checked himself, moved on hastily, and as he passed me I caught sight of a moisture in the eye, and a quivering about the lip, which showed me that from some association unknown to us the blow had struck deep. Rosa saw what I did. She paused only a moment, and ran after him. And before I could see him turn to speak to her, to my amazement and, let me add, to my extreme delight, I found that all traces of our artistic labours had vanished—the picturesque rocks were gone, the grotesque roots had melted into air. Once more there lay before me the plain, formal, but useful brick well,

with its pellucid water. The duckpath had again wriggled itself into ungraceful contortions, and best of all, the stunted wych elms and the decapitated poplar rose before me. The view of the church tower was again hidden, but the sight of York Cathedral would not have compensated to us for Sir Lloyd's grief at the loss of his mother's trees. It was clear that Rosa's heart had been touched—her wish unwished. And the greater part, though no longer all the mischief, was at once set right.

I breathed once more. 'Those wonderful pills!' I said to myself. 'What a blessing that they give us at least a chance of undoing one minute what we did the minute before!' 'Oh,' I thought, 'if the Fairy had but provided us with more pills! or Annette had not swallowed those five! or if Nature had but arranged a similar machinery for at once indulging every extravagance of desire! We might be foolish with impunity, if all the inconveniences caused by our folly could be removed as soon as they had awakened us to repentance.' Rosa, I am sure, shared my feelings. She made Sir Lloyd turn round, and pointed out to him that all which he most felt the loss of was restored to its former condition; and as he looked down on her affectionately (for her eyes were full of tears), he took her arm within his own, and walked with her down to the conservatory; and I

could not help overhearing him say: 'Oh, Rosa, let us have no more pills.'

'There are only two more,' said Rosa; 'what shall we do with them?'

But at this moment Mr. Haverstone, the gardener, came up, and Rosa had to return to me. We walked in silence to the terrace. She had a wonderful elasticity of spirits, far greater than my own; and though she had only just escaped from a very sharp pang of annoyance and remorse, the escape was so delightful that the temptation to risk it again recurred; and regret for her loss of the remaining pills evidently pressed upon her much.

'Oh,' she said, as we stood on the terrace looking over the quiet simple valley; 'oh, if we'—(you observe the 'we')—'oh, if we had never meddled with that nasty well! I had such a beautiful plan for to-morrow. I wanted to begin gently and only indulge one or two of you quietly on a small scale, and then you would have put confidence in my taste and judgment. But I had planned such a surprise for everyone. This would have been the most lovely place in the world; I should have remodelled it entirely. That flat meadow-land was to have been turned into a lake, like the one in the Claude in the drawing-room; I should have flooded the valley; and Copley Hill, with the Warren, which is now only a bank of copse wood, would have been a forest, with rocks and ruins.

Heidelberg I rather thought of,' she added, 'or perhaps Conway. I should have raised the hill at the back two or three thousand feet, and where Pendragon comes in—which, after all, does not deserve the name of a mountain—I should have had Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau, or Monte Rosa, or perhaps all three, with the Matterhorn and glaciers. Would it not have been glorious?'

'Yes,' I said, 'magnificent; but cold in winter.'

'Oh,' she replied, 'but we are in the middle of summer; and I should never have done anything as foolish as the rest have done, so as to lose the pills; and so I should have made it summer all the year round; it should have been quite warm.'

'What,' I asked, 'about the glaciers and the snow peaks?'

'I should have contrived that,' she replied, 'in some way.'

'Delightful!' I said, 'but how would the trees and the animals have liked it?'

'Oh,' she said, 'I should have told the Fairies to arrange everything of that kind.'

'And what,' I enquired, 'would you have done with the town when you flooded the valley?'

'I had thought of that,' she said; 'the houses—that is, some of them—in picturesque ruin, and the church tower—part of it, I should have allowed to remain under water at a great depth. The water was

to be quite clear; and you would have looked down into it, as they say you can in the lakes in Ireland, and have seen the ruins. And gold and silver fish, and mackerel — for their colour is so beautiful — were to be swimming about among them. And there would have been legends and all kinds of romantic notions about it. Would it not have been charming?'

'But the people,' I said, 'the men, women, and children?'

'They were all to be saved,' she said, 'none of them were to be drowned: I did not mean that.'

'But what did you mean to do with them?' I asked, 'when you had put their houses under water?'

'Oh,' she replied, 'I should have given the Fairies strict orders to take care of them. It would have been all right, I am quite sure.'

'And you would have been quite satisfied,' I said, 'in leaving them to the care of the Fairies?'

'Oh yes, why not? Of course they would know what was best for the poor people.'

'But,' I persisted, 'Sir Lloyd would not have liked to have lost so many acres of valuable land. Two-thirds of the estate would have been under water.'

'I could easily have compensated him for that,' she replied; 'he should have had a pearl fishery in the lake, or some beds of pink coral. Pink coral is most valuable now.'

'Are you quite sure that he would have liked the pink coral as much as his wheat and barley?' I said.

There was something in the tone of my voice which nettled her.

'You are always provoking,' she exclaimed. 'It would have been a most lovely place;' and she sighed again. 'And now ——'

But at this moment the old Doctor came limping upon the terrace, with his stick and umbrella. And Rosa, afraid of being interrogated on the success of her operations with her pill, and sympathised with, perhaps maliciously, for the forfeiture of her privilege, hastened to her own room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOCTOR.

As the Doctor passed Rosa in making his way towards me, he cast upon her a look into which he threw as much indignation and compassionate contempt as was compatible with his rather lukewarm temperament. And I may repeat what I have already remarked before, that I found our intercourse with the Fairy, and the enlargement of our sphere of benevolence, did not prove favourable to the development of kindly feelings among ourselves in our own narrow circle. He groaned as he reached me.

'Oh!' he said, 'I have such a headache, with all the noise made by that foolish girl this morning! If we are to have any more such scenes, I shall be obliged to leave the house. And what do you think has happened now? While I was sitting with Lady Lloyd, reading to her, the housekeeper came to say that all the water in the cistern was turned black, and we should have none either for drinking or washing. It

must be that wretched Fairy—some folly of Miss Aberleigh's.'

I endeavoured to soothe his irritation and evade his enquiries, and gradually led him on to the real object of his coming.

'It is,' he said, 'such a lamentable pity that this wonderful power should be placed in the hands of persons who do not know how to use it. How should women know how to make people happy? It was a great mistake that we did not make a different arrangement, and reserve them for us gentlemen. Women always run into extravagances; and no wonder that the last few days have been such a series of vexations. Unfortunately six of the pills have been wasted and lost, and only two are remaining; and these are to be entrusted to that child Emma, who, I suppose, will poison us with sugar plums. At any rate she is sure to make some foolish blunder like the rest, and then the last pill will come to you. And though I know I cannot ask you to waive your claim to it, yet I should like to put an idea before you. Perhaps —though of course I make no enquiries as to your intentions—you might be able to do something towards it, in case you have not yet decided on all your wishes. You know,' he continued, 'my principles are those of progress and the nineteenth century. Yet I have no wish to meddle, as Sir Lloyd did, with

European politics: my great longing is to do something for Sir Lloyd himself.'

'Poor Sir Lloyd!' I could not help thinking to myself, 'is he to be again the victim?'

But I suppressed my secret alarm, and encouraged the grateful old gentleman to say his say.

'His first thought,' continued the Doctor, 'was for me, that I might recover my health.'

'Yes,' I said, 'and it was no part of his intention, but a mere accident, that by recovering your health you should tumble down and break your bones.'

'No,' he replied, 'that was my own foolish fault, which he could not of course foresee.'

'True,' I said, 'and it is this sad inability of ours to foresee all the consequences of what we do which makes me ponder so anxiously how I shall dispose of my pill—that is, in case it should come to my turn; for little Emma may after all be more successful than any of us, and not have to retract her wishes: she may have both the pills.'

'Oh,' said the Doctor, 'that is impossible; children must do foolish things at her age. The last pill will certainly come to you. And if you could manage something for Sir Lloyd—I should so like to do him a kindness in return for his kindness to me.'

'Be assured,' I said, 'I sympathise heartily with your affection for Sir Lloyd; only perhaps the best thing we can do for him is to let him alone.'

'It would be, no doubt,' he replied, 'if any more foolish whims of women are to be indulged. But sensible men, like you and myself, could not make such blunders.'

I bowed gratefully to his compliment, and he continued:

'What I wish to do for him is a thing of the utmost importance, in which he might find a delicacy, and at any rate a difficulty, without the help of the good Fairy.'

I observed, by-the-by, that the Doctor alternated in his language respecting the Fairy, from good to wicked and from excellent to abominable, according as her gift seemed to bring him into shade or sunshine. In short, his ideas of virtue and vice were those of mankind in general. That which brought him pleasure was virtuous, and that which brought him pain was vicious. So thought the clever Athenians, as Aristotle tells us; and so thought the Doctor, and so think most modern philosophers and most modern people.

He proceeded, however, with his communication.

'You see,' he said, 'down in the valley yonder, where the Lug winds under that clump of poplars, that little strip of ground with the small haystack upon it; it is part of the old bed of the Lug, and is really nothing but a bank of shingle, which makes the case more distressing, because it is worth so

little in itself, and therefore there ought to be no fuss about it.'

'What fuss?' I asked, 'what distress?'

'Do you not know,' he asked, 'that that piece of ground does not belong to Sir Lloyd? It is Mr. Van Dunk's land.'

'No,' I said, 'I never heard of it before.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor, 'all the rich meadows under us on this side of the Lug are Sir Lloyd's. And only this wretched piece of worthless shingle belongs to Mr. Van Dunk. Is it not provoking?'

'Well,' I said, 'I really do not know. I never heard Sir Lloyd complain of it.'

'What!' exclaimed the Doctor with surprise, and almost with indignation, 'do you not perceive that the Lug—the river—is Sir Lloyd's natural boundary? Surely no man with a proper feeling of his own rights could be or ought to be happy without at least making an effort to extend his property to the limits pointed out by Nature.'

'You mean,' I said, 'in other words, without rectifying his frontiers?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'that is the proper expression. No one can say that the estate at present is well limited, and till it is well limited how can the owner rest in peace?'

'To rectify,' I said, 'is to make straight: suppose Sir Lloyd were to cut a straight ditch or trench from

the pollard willow to the great fir tree; would not that do?'

'No, no,' said the Doctor, 'for then there would be a small piece of his own ground beyond it on the wrong side. And who would ever consider an artificial ditch a natural boundary?'

'You mean,' I said, 'that what Nature has obviously marked out for him, so that any one would say it ought to belong to him, is in fact made his property by Nature, and he ought not to rest till in some way or other he has substantiated his claim?'

'Yes,' said the Doctor, 'undoubtedly this is the view which the best political philosophers in France have long taken; and I quite agree with them.'

'What a misfortune it is,' I said, 'that the lawyers do not understand this, but will fix the limits of estates upon principles so extremely different, and pointed out not by the hand of Nature, but by legal documents! But might I ask you? You know my own little estate between the Severn and the Wye, just beyond Chepstow? The Severn is before me, and the Wye behind me, both of them my natural boundaries; in fact, so natural and so effectual that I cannot cross them without going miles round to the ferry and the bridge. Now happily on one side my garden goes down to the Severn, and on that side I reach my natural boundary. But on the other side, between me and the Wye, Lord Burford comes in with his estate,

and cuts me off. Now you suggest the idea, I confess I begin to feel uneasy about this, and bound, if I can, to rectify my frontiers, and carry them down to the Wye. I think I might take advantage of my pill, for I am sure the happiness of the world will be promoted by anything which contributes to my own happiness. But then the thought troubles me, that possibly Lord Burford may feel as I do, and look upon the Severn as one of his natural boundaries, and some day or other, which is not impossible, he also may have a pill, and then what becomes of me?'

The Doctor at first seemed perplexed, but soon recovered his equilibrium.

'I think,' he said, 'we should always take a practical view of matters, and not indulge too much in dreamings—a habit which, as our mutual friend Professor Entwickelung of Tubingen remarks, cost Germany so much trouble, till that sensible man Herr Bismark undertook to settle matters. What Lord Burford may do hereafter if he should have a pill given him, is a theory, an undeveloped consciousness, with which I should not trouble myself. You have the pill, you have the power, and might makes right. If, indeed, I were obliged to philosophise on the abstract right you possess to annex Lord Burford's property, I should be inclined to ask which way your house fronts. Do your sitting-rooms look to the Wye or the Severn? If to the Severn, it is clear that the

Severn will every moment be presenting itself to your inner consciousness as your natural boundary, which of course you will desire to reach. And so, on the other hand, if you look towards the Wye, will the Wye appear. It depends entirely which way the house fronts.'

'Yes,' I said, 'there is much in that. And your remark explains the meaning of the term "natural boundary." We must understand by it not so much one which Nature has fixed for us, as one which it is natural we should wish for.'

'Precisely so,' said the Doctor.

'And the inclination within us, the longing for it,' I continued, 'we may justly regard as the voice of Nature telling us that she wishes and intends us to have it. It is a comforting principle of ethics; I only hope that you will be able to indoctrinate the magistrates with it. I saw a hungry boy the other day looking very earnestly upon some gingerbread on a stall in the fair; and he stood fronting it for some time, so that Nature at last told him, beyond the possibility of a mistake, that she intended the gingerbread for him, and that he was bound to annex it; and yet the policeman did not understand this, and took him off to the magistrate, and I believe he was severely punished—magistrates are so bigoted to old notions. You should give them public lectures, and show them that the same principles are to be applied to the

annexation of gingerbread, and pocket-handkerchiefs, and purses, as to that of fortresses and provinces: I mean the principles of nature.'

The Doctor coughed and hemmed, and took out of his pocket some French and German newspapers, which I had seen him constantly perusing.

'To return to Sir Lloyd,' he said, 'there are several other reasons why I so wished that he should have that piece of ground. At present the cows and sheep in these meadows of his are not safe. They may be attacked some night by Mr. Van Dunk, and carried off. Sir Lloyd ought to guard against this. Mr. Van Dunk, having a piece of ground on this side of the Lug may at any moment cross the river, take up a strong position on his own land, and then break down that slight fence of Sir Lloyd's; and all Sir Lloyd's property is at his mercy.'

'But,' I said, 'Mr. Van Dunk is an old, nearly bedridden man, who can only move upon crutches. I doubt if he would venture on such a proceeding. And if it is to be so much dreaded, cannot Sir Lloyd strengthen his fence, or station a policeman, or set steel traps and spring guns on his own premises? Besides, there is a footpath with a gate a little higher up, by which Mr. Van Dunk can, at any time he chooses, come upon Sir Lloyd's land. So that it seems useless to take such precautions with this piece of ground.'

'Ah!' said the Doctor, 'but the Lug is Sir Lloyd's natural boundary; and if he had this piece of ground, his strategical position would be so much more secure. To say nothing of another reason, why he should have it—Mr. Van Dunk has just bought Collings's farm, and enlarged his acreage considerably; and therefore Sir Lloyd ought to have some addition to his own estate too. And Mr. Van Dunk ought to see this, and give up some land to him, to preserve the balance of property in the county. I do think it is very ungracious, and a rudeness which should be resented, that Mr. Van Dunk has not perceived this, and given up some land before; especially as Sir Lloyd made no objection, and did not prevent Mr. Van Dunk from completing his new purchases.'

'No,' I said, 'because Sir Lloyd could not. He had no means of preventing it.'

'But there is another reason still,' said the Doctor. 'Are you aware that that piece of ground formerly belonged to Sir Lloyd's great-great-grandfather, and that he parted with it for a consideration—sold it, I mean—to Mr. Van Dunk's great-great-grandmother? So that Sir Lloyd must always feel as if it rightfully belonged to him.'

'No,' I replied, 'I never heard of the fact before.'

'And,' continued the Doctor, 'there is yet another important consideration; do you see those cows grazing on the piece of ground in question?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Are you aware,' said the Doctor, 'that those are Welsh cows, bred in Merionethshire, of the old genuine Welsh stock?'

'No, indeed I was not,' I answered. 'Are they really?'

'Yes,' said the Doctor; 'and Mr. Van Dunk is a Dutchman, with Scandinavian blood in him. His mother was a Dane, and—would you believe it, sir,' he continued, with indignant fervour—'he has a Dutch milkmaid, who, while she milks them, sings Dutch songs, which the poor animals do not understand?'

'Not more, I suppose,' was my reply, 'than I understand you at present.'

'Not understand!' exclaimed the Doctor earnestly —'not understand the feeling of nationality, the love of Fatherland, the spirit of Patriotismus! Can those cows be happy in such a position? Can they, with a particle of Welsh feeling in them, submit to belong to a Dutch proprietor, and to be milked by a Dutch girl, and to listen to Dutch songs?'

'But,' I said, 'if they have good grass, and are well milked, and well taken care of——'

'No,' he interrupted; 'do not talk to me of such low considerations. No patriotic cow can ever endure to belong to a foreigner.'

'And are the cows, then, bound to join together and hook the milkmaid,' I said, 'or Mr. Van Dunk himself?'

'Well, I won't enter now,' said the Doctor, 'into this point; but I do know that Sir Lloyd—who is a genuine Welshman, with all the Llewellyn blood in him—ought to interfere to free them from the tyranny under which they are now groaning. It is his duty to drive out Mr. Van Dunk, and appropriate—I mean deliver—the cows, especially as the piece of land is so convenient for his own purpose. It is just the place he wants to build his new cow-house on. And, remember, he will only annex—or rather reunite them—join them again to the stock from which they sprang—for all Sir Lloyd's cows are Welsh. And there is still another reason—a political and social reason'—said the Doctor, raising his voice oratorically. 'All the tenants on Sir Lloyd's estate are, I know, longing to live within a ring fence. The farmers are very united, and have, in fact, a strong passion for unity. They wish to belong to a large estate which stands high in the county. And I do not think they can, or should, be satisfied and happy till the bounds have been well rounded. Indeed their wish, and mine too, would be to carry them along that fine sweep of the river, so that they might be completely rectified and unified. Unity is surely a grand idea.'

'Most grand,' I replied; 'but I wish people sometimes would think a little of plurality also. A combi-

nation of the two, approaches more nearly to my idea of perfection, and to the idea of some other minds also, than either of them alone without the other.'

'It may be so,' said the Doctor; 'but I know what the feeling of the tenants is, and that they are longing to attack Mr. Van Dunk, expel him from his piece of land, emancipate his cows, and confine him behind his natural boundaries. Sir Lloyd may then hope once more to have peace and quiet. There is no other way of obtaining it. If gentle means fail—and we have tried them long enough—surely there cannot be any harm in a little force—the object is so desirable.'

'Yes,' I said, 'there is certainly one way of producing unity—ridding the world of everyone but oneself, or at least of everyone who differs from us. But what will the magistrates say—Mr. Bull, and Mr. Peters, and Sir Leopold, and the other gentlemen of the Quorum?'

'Well,' said the Doctor, 'Mr. Peters, I know, is looking at those meadows belonging to Sir Charles Constantine, which lie at the south of his own park, and he wants to build a little villa there for the winter. Only let him have his way there, he will let you have yours, and take no notice. As for Mr. Bull, though he has a large income, he is over head and ears in debt, and does not choose to spend money. He is

going to retire from the magistracy, and not trouble himself with any more county business.'

'I am sorry to hear that,' I said. 'But whether he likes it or not, county business will trouble him. It is very easy for the snail to shut himself up in his shell, and say the thrush shall not trouble it, but I scarcely ever take a walk without seeing on a stone the remains of a snail's shell, which the thrush has picked up with his beak and broken on a stone. And under those circumstances what becomes of the snail? And then as to Sir Leopold, and the other magistrates?—'

'Oh,' said the Doctor, 'their acreage is small; and they are afraid of taking part against the great land-owners, lest they should be swallowed up themselves. But, indeed, I do not think you need trouble yourself about the opinion or feeling of the other magistrates. You will have the pill, that is, you will be the stronger. You need no further apology.'

I listened with what I am afraid was rather a scornful countenance, as the Doctor proceeded still further to expound his views; upon which he had so deeply pondered, that he actually produced an ordnance map marked with the changes in property which the seizure of Mr. Van Dunk's land might render necessary in the way of compensation to the persons who, in one way or other, might consider themselves injured by it or bound to interfere to prevent it.

'You will see,' he said, 'I have marked the lines

with red ink, to show what a great improvement it would make, and how much more regular the map would look, if, when we once began to alter, we were to rearrange all the little adjoining properties, which are now scattered about, and running awkwardly into each other. For instance, Hobbs's farm, and Dobbs and Scrobbs's holdings, are much too small. They make no figure in the map at all. And they each feel this, I know, very acutely. It pains them. And as all the three names end in *obbs*, and are evidently of Saxon origin, it is quite right that their holdings should be united together. They will then be of some importance, and the line of boundary, instead of being full of zigzags, will be almost a circle—which you know is a perfect figure. Nothing is easier than to unite them.'

'But,' I asked, 'who is to be annexed to whom? Is Hobbs, Dobbs, or Scrobbs, to be the happy master of the united holdings?'

'Oh, Hobbs, of course,' said the Doctor. 'He has the largest holding already. So there is no doubt. The principle of attraction decides that; it is a law of nature.'

'And what is to become,' I asked, 'of poor Dobbs and Scrobbs?'

'Well,' he said, 'I had not arranged anything definitely about that. But it would be very easy to give the Fairies orders to take care of them.'

'Yes,' I said, 'there would not be much trouble in that. But on second thoughts, now we have been looking at those three occupations, which are not far beyond Sir Lloyd's boundary line—though they are on the other side of the Lug—don't you think that their line makes a better sweep for Sir Lloyd's bounds than even the Lug itself? If we follow the river, we have to encounter an awkward bend, which it is better to avoid.'

'Well,' said the Doctor, 'I confess that has struck me.'

'Or stop,' I said; 'are you quite sure that the river is indeed our natural boundary? It is but narrow, and a small bridge thrown over it unites both banks; and so it ceases to be a boundary at all. Let us stroll up the hill, and you will see how much more natural it is to draw a line from the white cottage round the wood and so down to the poplars.

We reached the summer-house at the top of the plantation, and commanded a wider prospect.

'This,' I said, 'is the point from which to look. I was wrong. Evidently Copley Hill, on the other side of the valley, ought to be our boundary. The hill closes the view; you see nothing beyond it; and by taking in all the valley, one can unite everything, and make the estate perfect. No estate, it is an axiom, can be perfect, so long as the owner can see from his window a single piece of ground which does

not belong to himself. Come up a little higher—up to the open ground at the Cleve Hill,' I added—'and you will be convinced.'

We stood on the summit of the hill. Both of us remained for a minute or two silent.

'Dear me,' said the Doctor at last, 'I have my doubts. I do not think the line is so naturally marked here. We can see quite over Copley now, into the Worcestershire plain. And there is Morden Park lying at the foot of the hill—a charming place, more fitted for a residence than Brooklyn. Would it not be a nice thing, while we are about it, to give that to Sir Lloyd?'

'There is not sufficient ground attached to it,' I said. 'The park is too small for the house. We should have to throw into it the woods belonging to Lord Carley.'

'But why make an awkward curve, and stop short of the two villages?' said the Doctor. 'Throw them in, and carry your eye round from Steventon spire to the railway and the canal.'

'No,' I said. 'I should not like these for a boundary; they are not sufficiently natural. It would be better to throw at once all Lord Carley's farms into Sir Lloyd's, and so carry Sir Lloyd's boundary to the Wrekin and the Worcestershire hills.'

'If we go as far as that,' said the Doctor, half doubting whether I was in earnest, 'you must take in

Gloucestershire, and Warwickshire, and Oxfordshire; for the view from the top of the Wrekin is very extensive.'

'And Berkshire,' I continued, 'and Middlesex, and Kent, and then we shall have reached the sea. I think, after all, the sea is our natural boundary. Let us include all England.'

'The British Isles, you mean,' said the Doctor, growing excited.

'Of course,' I corrected myself. 'I should have said the British Isles.'

'It will be simpler,' said the Doctor, thoughtfully.

'But is the sea indeed,' I continued, 'our natural boundary? With that very narrow strait from Dover to Calais, and the prospect of a tunnel and a bridge, and the cordial understanding between the two nations, and the International Exhibition, I cannot help looking upon France as one with England. Remember, England had once a part of France, and France the whole of England. Think of the Normans, of our laws, and language. Surely Nature points to a reunion. Suppose,' I added—amusing myself with encouraging an idea which the poor old man had evidently dwelt upon till he was scarcely sane—'suppose we give Sir Lloyd, France, and stop at the Alps.'

'What!' cried the Doctor, 'with Italy lying beyond them, and a tunnel running under Mont Cenis?

Omit Venice! Omit Rome! Why, we should be more dull, more insensible to duty, and the charms of unity, than the Italians themselves. No, if we once cross the Channel, Italy of all countries we must have.'

'And why not Greece?' I suggested. 'And Egypt, Jerusalem, Calcutta, Pekin, New York, Mexico, and Australia? It simplifies matters.'

The Doctor looked at me in amazement.

'Take in the earth,' I continued. 'And why should we not have the moon? it belongs to the earth. And can we omit the planets? And certainly, if we wish for unity and perfection, we must have the sun. And what do you say to the fixed stars? I think they come within the line. In fact, when we are about it, why not——'

But here, happily, our explosion of coveteousness was itself exploded by the ringing of the luncheon bell; and the Doctor, at length thoroughly roused to a suspicion by my satire, returned with me, in moody silence, to the house.

CHAPTER XIV.

EMMA'S PILL.

BUT, by that time, whatever had been the activity of my fancy upon the subject of annexations, and the proper limitation of Sir Lloyd's estate, my own body had become sadly disturbed. Shooting pains thrilled through every limb. My head ached, my lips became parched. I shivered and burned, burned and shivered; and when I reached the house, instead of joining the party at the luncheon-table, I retired to my room with a violent attack of rheumatic fever—the natural product of our visit to the clouds, and our operations at the well.

Lady Lloyd came to see me, and so did poor Rosa, in the deepest distress. And the line which my own remarks to them took might be easily anticipated. With all that sincerity of repentance at having brought ourselves into trouble, that fervour of prudent exhortation to others, which usually attends a fever and headache, or any other ache, brought on by our own fault, I expostulated on the worse than folly

of having anything to do with fairies; entreated that Lady Lloyd would at once put into my own hands one of the two remaining pills, that it might be safe from misapplication, and listened with satisfaction to Rosa's repeated assurance, that she felt convinced that Emma's first wish to-morrow, in employing hers, would be my own restoration to health. And of this, indeed, I felt satisfied; though I could not help at the same time asking myself, whether my recovery would be followed, like the Doctor's, by breaking my leg.

They then administered some medicine, and left me with a nurse. And as I am not like a Special Correspondent of the *Times*, or any other newspaper, charged with the duty of enlightening the nation on the details of a coronation, the battles of a campaign, or the politics of a European Congress, I do not feel myself compelled, as they do, to interlard my public history with the details of my own life, my conversation with the nurse, or my opinion of the housemaid, how often I asked for toast and water, how often I turned in my bed, what my dreams were when I dozed, and what my pills and draughts were made of, when I was awakened to take them. Such information would doubtless be very interesting to the public, and it would be pleasant to myself to give it—for we all like to talk about ourselves, especially in the newspapers;—but I must deprive myself of this gratification. Suffice it to say, my night was a night

of rheumatism, and rheumatism of a very emphatic description. About half-past six I woke from a disturbed feverish doze, and with a voice of more than usual plaintiveness, commenced a faint whisper to the nurse, praying for the rearrangement of my pillow; when suddenly, in the middle of the sentence, from the almost inarticulate breathing with which my petition commenced, my voice broke out, like the Irish Rebellion, 10,000 strong, into a most robust and sonorous diapason. The nurse, who was preparing to lift up my hand gently, and lay it more comfortably by my side, was surprised by a strong and vigorous jerk from it, which nearly gave her a blow as fatal as that of the baby on Farmer Flail's visage. I made a movement, and sat upright, tore off my nightcap, and flung it away. And then I stretched out my arm to ring the bell. The nurse imagined I was delirious, and prepared to call for assistance. But I soon reassured her, declared that I was quite well, begged her to ring for Wyatt, and warm water, that I might shave and dress; and with very great surprise, and even something of superstitious dread at my seeming preternatural recovery, she left me;—left me to reflect, with profound satisfaction, on the obvious efficacy of Emma's pill, and her kind wish for my recovery.

At the usual time the breakfast bell rang; and going down, I found myself surrounded in the library by the greetings of the assembled party, and especially

of Rosa, who had been seriously alarmed by my illness. I asked for Emma, that I might offer her my warm thanks for my restoration to health, but Emma was nowhere to be found. Annette, Lady Lloyd's maid, brought an elegant twisted note, which had been found on the dressing-table, in the child's room. It was a note from the Fairy, apologising for having come and carried off her little favourite to a picnic party at Pwlyldwmllwl. [You remember the name of the waterfall on Pendragon.] But she promised to send her back in the evening.

I confess I was a little alarmed by this disappearance, which seemed, to my awakened suspicions, indicative of some manœuvre, savouring of mischief. One object seemed evident, and that was, to keep Emma out of the way, that her child-like, affectionate mind might not too easily be worked on to repent of the troubles in which her plans for our enjoyment might involve us, and that we might drain her cup of blessings, whatever it might contain, to the bottom.

My own fears were, in some degree, shared by the rest of the party. Still the rapidity and reality of my own recovery wore a comforting and reassuring aspect. The Fairy—whether the abominable or the good—could not be absolutely bent upon our destruction, when such undeniable benefits so evidently followed in the wake of her gifts—of some of them at least. And we had not yet realised fully that very important

truth—that, as in the world generally, good does not make its appearance without evil, so evil does not come without some good—any more than a convex line can present itself without being accompanied by a concave, or a perpendicular without a vertical. Emma also, we felt, was too young to have launched into very vast and comprehensive plans for our happiness. We each expected to receive from her either a present of a picture-book, or a box of bonbons, or an invitation to a children's ball, or a new wax doll, and doll's house. And we flattered ourselves that, with a smile at her innocent simplicity, and at her mistaken notions on the nature of an adult's happiness, we might, if we liked, waive her offering aside, and reach the close of the day in safety.

In this frame of mind we moved into the breakfast-room. But what was our astonishment? Instead of the usual appetising array of urn and coffee-pot, cups and saucers, sugar basins and cream jugs, pats of purest butter and loaves of whitest bread, with a side table charged with its usual delicacies of cold meats, &c.; we found the table crowded with a profusion of dishes, and covers, and tureens carefully arranged in groups, so that each chair was provided with its own separate feast. I looked to my usual place, at Lady Lloyd's right hand, and saw set before me a pyramid of jam puffs of a triangular shape, something like a cocked hat, and nothing

else. But before Lady Lloyd was placed a large junk of salt beef, a huge mass of bacon, six red herrings, a leathern stoup of strong ale, and a manchet of bread, flanked by a silver cup filled with a liquid, which I afterwards found was metheglin, and by half a Dutch cheese. And then it flashed upon my mind, that only two days before, when the conversation had turned on the subject of food, and on the diversities of taste which prevail at different times in different countries in regard to meals, Lady Lloyd had expressed a desire, as a mere curiosity, to breakfast, at least once in her life, as the Maids of Honour breakfasted in the days of Queen Elizabeth. And her desire had been carefully treasured up by the affection of her little sister, and was now about to be realised. For my own jam puffs, my memory supplied a similar solution. On the same occasion I had recalled a recollection of schoolboy days, and of some delicious articles of that kind, with which the basket of Alnutt, the pie-man, used to supply us; and described how, on a cold December day, the hot pastry had almost burnt our lips, whilst the jam ran streaming down between our fingers in luscious clamminess, more delicious to a schoolboy's palate than all the *pâtisserie* of the most refined *cuisine*. 'Oh!' I had said, 'if I could but recall the relish of those jam puffs! Never had I enjoyed anything so much.' And, lo! now the enjoyment was provided for me.

I said that the puffs stood alone. I forgot—a plate of apples stood beside them, of a peculiar kind, called bitter-sweets, useful in making cider, but otherwise, to an adult appetite, by no means tempting. But I had confessed to the fact, that a tree of these identical apples had stood in my private tutor's garden; that it had for me and my companions peculiar charms, being not only loaded with fruit, and that fruit provided with the requisite tartness and sweetness to charm a juvenile palate; but being also out of bounds, and strictly *tabooed*, so that eating the apples had the additional piquancy of disobedience—I might have said of theft. Doubtless to us boys, as to man in general, the stealthy and felonious character of the indulgence, very early in the morning, or in the late twilight, or when our tutor and the rest of the family were known to be from home, gave a zest to the flavour of these bitter-sweets; as a little sin did to the social enjoyment of the Parisian lady. And no pine-apples had ever since been so delicious to me. I had bewailed the fact; Emma had noted it down; and I saw before me my proposed breakfast of puffs and bitter-sweets—with the addition of some dark burnt treacle-like compositions, of a most sickening and deleterious appearance—a species of lollipop, on the charm of which, in my early days, I had also expatiated, and mourned that it could never be recalled. It was clear that she had resolved on giving each for breakfast something which he or

she had expressed a wish to eat; and I could imagine the longing which she had to be present, and see us enjoy ourselves, and receive our thanks; only the cruel Fairy had carried her off to the picnic. I looked round to ascertain what luxuries had been provided for the rest, and found Sir Lloyd nearly hidden from view, behind a Cheddar cheese of portentous magnitude and powerful odour—so powerful, indeed, that the ladies were obliged to hold their scented handkerchiefs to their noses. Whether it was, to use the language of the compounder, a funeral or a groaning cheese—that is, a cheese of the first quality, concocted and reserved for the possible occasion of a funeral, or of a birth in the family, in the course of the year, I do not know. But I now remembered, that Sir Lloyd had expatiated on the excellence of such a cheese, of which he had once partaken in my house. And Emma had not forgotten it. She had, unhappily, forgotten to name bread with it, as Lady Lloyd had forgotten our dressing things at Pennicocosheetag. But this was not the only instance in which her forethought for our provision had failed.

Mrs. Heathorn had confessed her ignorance of the taste of caviar, and her desire to become acquainted with it. And before her was placed, for her breakfast, a large dish of caviar. But as Emma did not know of any other delicacy for which she had expressed a desire, it stood alone in its glory, as the

Cheddar cheese did for Sir Lloyd, without any bread. Mrs. Heathorn, however, imagined it to be some kind of rich fruity jam, and turned to it from the odoriferous cheese with satisfaction, though there was no bread to eat with the jam.

Mrs. Beaumont, with her usual strength of mind and largeness of view, had dwelt often on the absurd prejudicies which limit the range of our English cookery, and had expressed her readiness, and even her wish, if the opportunity were ever offered her, to partake of a dish of French frogs. And, accordingly, such a dish was now before her ;—it was impossible to mistake them ;—and also a tureen of snail soup, which she had heard, from an eminent physician, possessed highly nutritious qualities, and for which a particular breed of large snails she knew was cultivated by the Romans, specimens of them being still found in England, in the neighbourhood of ancient Roman baths and villas.

On Mrs. Aberleigh her affectionate daughter had, of couse, lavished her tenderest care, and collected an assemblage of dainties, culled from the choicest of those most in favour with Emma herself. I perceived that her opening meal of the day was to consist of a tureen of mock-turtle soup, a delicious dish of hashed calf's head, minced veal, and mashed potatoes, a snowy trifle, a tipsy cake, and a profusion of barley-sugar and bonbons, intermixed with macaroons,

Mr. Lovell, a gentleman who was one day breakfasting with us, had been heard, by Emma, enlarging on the peculiarities of an Oxford undergraduate's breakfast, which Rosa had expressed a wish to see, and before her now was spread one of those heterogeneous vulgarities of extravagance, which Oxford undergraduates imagine to be a specimen of hospitality and good taste, whatever deficiency they may exhibit in economy and prudence. The cloth was hidden beneath a very coarse-looking assemblage of tea and beer, coffee and champagne, chocolate and egg-flip, fish and ice, mutton chops and beef-steaks, sausages and chicken, eggs and bacon, and cigars.

But Rosa's fate was blessed compared with that of the philosophic Mr. Heathorn, who, as a scientific man, was of course a member of the Acclimatisation Society, and who, in Emma's hearing, had lamented that he had been unable to attend the last dinner of that Society, when a variety of dishes had been served up from China and Japan. All these were now set before him. Fins of sharks, and birds' nest soup, and a variety of other esculents of a most nondescript and suspicious appearance to a European eye; among which, however, I was able to discern the famous ragout of slugs, and a delicious *barbecue* of puppy-dogs.

But the greatest and especial treat was reserved for the poor Doctor. His classical taste and studies were of course known to us all. And Emma, whom

he had been vainly endeavouring to instruct in the mysteries of the Latin language, was most desirous to express her gratitude by an appropriate return. She knew that he had often sighed for a genuine Roman meal, a real Apician banquet, that he might be able to understand and enter into some difficult passages in the classics, and this wish was at last to be gratified. We found him already lying at full length in the recess, in which the sideboard usually stood, and reposing—if a most awkward and uncomfortable attitude on a hard settle could be called repose—his head resting upon his elbow, and his other arm prepared, though in a very ungraceful and clumsy manner, to carry to his mouth the delicacies set before him.

'Oh!' he cried, as I turned my eyes to him; 'what is the meaning of this? What is going to be done with me?'

'Congratulate yourself,' I said, 'my dear friend; I cannot doubt that the Fairy's people are as deeply skilled in classical archæology and Apicius as yourself; and you will now have an opportunity, such as no modern has ever enjoyed, of eating a real Roman meal. You are,' I added, 'evidently reposing in a triclinium.'

'But it is so hard!' he said. 'I wish they would give me another cushion. And how shall I carve the dishes with only one arm free, and that the left one?'

'Compose yourself,' I said. 'Be assured all this will

be provided for. Yes, evidently here is the genuine Roman feast; the peacock with all its feathers on, the wild boar roasted whole, with cold sauce of pepper, origanum, parsley seed, radishes, cummin, fennel, stock-broth wine, &c. Ah! 'I continued, 'and here we have the fish: the polypus, the sea-urchins, the cuttle-fish, and the oysters, exhibiting even to my nostrils the most decisive signs that they come from a distance, from Rutupium. And here, too, is the pie of dormice, smothered in honey, and the fowl stuffed with asa-fœtida. I declare, they have given you every kind of chicken—the Parthian, the Numidian, the Laseratus, the Paroptus, the Vardan, the Frontoman, the Trau-togalatus, the Lecozymus; and here is the wine duly mixed and tempered with turpentine and sea-water. And last, yet first of all, here is the emetic which you will take to secure you an enjoyable ap-petite.'

And before I had finished my sentence, I observed the said emetic, which lay in a curious old glass phial, slowly pour itself out into a cup, and the cup rise up from the table and approach the Doctor's shuddering lips, into which it poured itself slowly, but without spilling a drop; while the Doctor's mouth, evidently struggling to close, and his head stiffly fixed upon his neck, and his hands seemingly pinioned down to his side, showed that some invisible agents were duti-fully occupied in fulfilling Emma's orders. I thought

also that I heard a little fluster in the air, as of a suppressed giggling and chuckling among children, when they are busy with some work of mischief. But this may have been fancy. I turned away, and found all the rest of the party, with various expressions of loathing, examining their allotted dishes; Lady Lloyd, rather disconcerted with her little sister's mistake as to our tastes in diet, yet trying to laugh it off good-naturedly, begged me to ring the bell.

'Happily,' she said, 'there is no great mischief done. I suppose we shall all prefer to send away our dainties, and content ourselves with the humbler food of tea and coffee, bread and butter. Will you ring,' she added, 'for Gray?'

And I rang, and Gray appeared, and was desired to clear the table, and prepare breakfast as usual. It was with a very solemn, clouded, and anxious look that he entered the room; but I cannot attempt to picture his face when he saw the table covered with this medley of culinary monstrosities, which he knew had never been concocted in the kitchen. Nor was his aspect of horror at all softened when he endeavoured to take up the dish of slugs from Mr. Heathorn's repast, and found it so firmly fixed or held down to the table, that any attempt to move it was hopeless.

'We're bewitched!' he exclaimed, 'we're bewitched —the house is haunted!'

else. But before Lady Lloyd was placed a large junk of salt beef, a huge mass of bacon, six red herrings, a leathern stoup of strong ale, and a manchet of bread, flanked by a silver cup filled with a liquid, which I afterwards found was metheglin, and by half a Dutch cheese. And then it flashed upon my mind, that only two days before, when the conversation had turned on the subject of food, and on the diversities of taste which prevail at different times in different countries in regard to meals, Lady Lloyd had expressed a desire, as a mere curiosity, to breakfast, at least once in her life, as the Maids of Honour breakfasted in the days of Queen Elizabeth. And her desire had been carefully treasured up by the affection of her little sister, and was now about to be realised. For my own jam puffs, my memory supplied a similar solution. On the same occasion I had recalled a recollection of schoolboy days, and of some delicious articles of that kind, with which the basket of Alnutt, the pie-man, used to supply us; and described how, on a cold December day, the hot pastry had almost burnt our lips, whilst the jam ran streaming down between our fingers in luscious clamminess, more delicious to a schoolboy's palate than all the *pâtisserie* of the most refined *cuisine*. 'Oh!' I had said, 'if I could but recall the relish of those jam puffs! Never had I enjoyed anything so much.' And, lo! now the enjoyment was provided for me.

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upon one point, then glided up into the air, and then crammed itself into my mouth. While, to complete and realise fully the revival of my boyish luxury, a clotted stream of sticky jam, concocted from some unknown fruit or berry, oozed scalding down between my fingers, dropped upon my clothes, and besmeared my chin and my neckcloth. I crunched involuntarily one, and hoped that I had done my duty. But another followed, and another; six in all. (Children think one can never have enough.) And then came the bitter sweet apples. (My digestion, I should say, never was good, and my appetite rather fastidious.) And lastly, the black nauseous-looking preparation of burnt treacle, grease, and bulls' blood, of which I had also spoken with enthusiasm, in my reminiscences of schoolboy luxuries, and which, I believe, are to be classed as a species under the general head of lollipops.

In the meantime, the preface to the ancient Roman feast was successfully affecting its object, and the Doctor was duly preparing himself for his classical luxuries. Mrs. Aberleigh, having broken her fast with two helpings of mock-turtle, and a plate of hashed calves' head (the minced veal and mashed potatoes had not been pressed upon her), was now engaged on a perfect Mont Blanc of trifle and tipsy cake, preparatory to her macaroons and bonbons. Mrs. Heathorn was revelling in the delicious flavour of the caviar un-

marred by anything which could weaken it; Mr. Heathorn, after having done due honour to the *fricassée* of slugs, saw a knife and fork delicately and artistically carving for him the haunch of a puppy-dog; Sir Lloyd was gorged to the throat with his odoriferous Cheddar cheese; Mrs. Beaumont had finished the snail soup, and was preparing for the frogs; Rosa had partaken of her sausages, champagne, beer and porter, beef-steaks and ice; and Lady Lloyd, after a thick slice of salt junk, was enjoying her third red herring with the accompaniment of a draught of ale. And then, whether the Fairies relented, or human endurance could bear no more, we all turned pale as a sheet—our eyes rolled in our heads—by a gigantic effort we broke loose from our invisible chains, and rushed each to our rooms.

The consequences of the repast, I will leave it to other historians to record. I recovered myself after a little interval, and as I sank into my chair, I could not suppress a smothered exclamation of indignation against the poor child, who, with studious and affectionate research into our several tastes, had so contrived to poison us with the very objects of our wishes. And yet I could not help confessing that adults, as well as children, have sometimes made precisely the same mistake, with the same good intentions. Adults, as well as children, have existed, who have thought that a crane's neck, to prolong the luxury of swallowing,

would be the *summum bonum* of man; and whose whole hope was living to eat, instead of eating to live. I had myself gone through some experiences of this kind. I had travelled, and had been forced to drink sugarless coffee with an Arabian sheik, and brandy till my head was splitting, at a Norwegian dinner party; to smoke with a Turkish pasha, and eat singed sheep's head with a Highland chief. I had quaffed whisky toddy with an Irish host, and revelled, as the greatest of enjoyments and of compliments, in a mess of rice, grease, gravy, and fat mutton, deposited on my plate by the oily hands of an Egyptian vizir; and I could recall many a hospitable table, even in England, where nothing would satisfy the hostess, but my eating till I loathed the sight of food; whilst in my younger days, I had been locked into a room at a supper party, till bumpers of claret had been emptied.

No—Emma's mistake was not so uncommon; and as my nerves recovered their tone, my temper lapsed again into placidity, and I actually forgave her.

CHAPTER XV.

A HOUSEHOLD IN ALARM.

As I reposed tranquilly in my arm-chair, after the fatigue of the breakfast, I amused myself with fancying what Emma's next blunder might be, and how I should be compelled, the following morning, to undo its effects, and blot it from the memory of man.

Of one thing I felt sure, that her mother, on whom she doted, would be the chief victim of her love; and whilst solacing myself with this idea, and also pondering on certain schemes of my own, for the good of mankind, I so far recovered myself that I thought fresh air and a stroll would complete the cure, and resolved that I would walk down to Rayadil, and put some letters in the post. But as I passed by the library-door, I was alarmed at finding the whole establishment, from Mrs. Watkins the cook, to the kitchen-maid, and the stable boys, assembled with faces of terror, mystery, solemnity, and resolution, all evidently in a conscientious conspiracy to take some decisive step in a matter of life and death. And their eyes were fastened on the door, within which,

as a deputation from the body, Mrs. Alsop, the housekeeper, Mr. Haverstone, the head gardener, and Mr. Gray, the butler, had just been admitted to have an audience with Lady Lloyd; Sir Lloyd having gone out for a ride, to shake off, if possible, the indigestion consequent upon his Cheddar cheese. I caught sight, among the rest, of Wyatt, my own man, beckoned him to me, and enquired what was the matter. He was an admirable servant, very faithful, and I knew would not leave my service, if he could possibly help it. But I found that he was of one mind with the rest. The house, they said, was haunted; there were ghosts in it, and goblins, and every description of supernatural monster; and they could not stay in it another day. They had all come to give warning in a body, and Mrs. Alsop and the heads of the servants' hall were at this moment communicating their resolution to Lady Lloyd.

'Give warning!' I exclaimed. 'Go away! But surely they will not go off suddenly, and leave their master and mistress, who are so kind to them? "You are not going too, Wyatt, I hope?"'

But Wyatt looked down, made many indistinct excuses, owned that I was the best of masters, and that nothing else could induce him to quit me, but that he could not stay in a haunted house, to be bewitched again, as he had been already. It was against his conscience.

Poor Lady Lloyd! For myself the blow was comparatively nothing. But for her it was tremendous. I ventured to open the door of the library; and she welcomed my arrival with some sense of relief.

'What am I to do?' she said to me aside; while the deputation from the servants' hall stood respectfully, and sorrowfully, and yet firmly at the door. 'What is to become of us, with the people coming on Saturday, and the archery meeting here next week?' And turning to the deputation, she begged them to leave the room for five minutes, and then communicated to me the nature of their mission.

It appeared that neither Mr. Gray nor Wyatt had ever recovered from the shock; the one of his own involuntary warblings and quaverings upon 'Angels, ever bright and fair;' to say nothing of the 'Huntsman's chorus;' the other of finding himself suddenly invested with a black beard and moustache, a white waistcoat and gold chain, and compelled to perform florid and brilliant improvisations upon the air in 'Don Giovanni.'

The whole household also had been summoned into the butler's pantry, to listen to the wonderful performance of Norbury Brook; and two of the boldest and stoutest of the farm labourers, armed with bludgeons, having searched every bush on the bank, and no performer having been found, some excuse was certainly to be made for an hypothesis of

supernatural agency. The dripping dresses of both Rosa and myself on our return from a supposed walk in a hot day, my sickness and instantaneous recovery, the sudden appearance and disappearance of the rockwork and roots at the well, had increased the suspicion and raised the alarm of the household to fever heat, intensified by the reports which arrived from the neighbourhood.

For it seemed that, although the Lethe wish had succeeded in effacing any distinct memory of past transactions, there still remained a sense of something mysterious and terrible, like the vague impression of a frightful dream, which yet we cannot recall. Some families had had visions of white bears, others had fancied they were drowned. Mrs. Budd's husband, and the other occupants of the new houses, no longer in existence, had been heard to scream in the night, 'Hurrah for Mrs. Aberleigh!' and to crown the whole, Maria, the dairy-maid, had been sent to shut a window in an outhouse; and being naturally timid, she had accepted the offer of one of the stable boys to accompany her, and in passing through an arrow passage, she had received a slap on the back, which sent her into hysterics, and she was brought into the servants' hall almost insensible from fright; and no wonder, as the housemaid remarked, for Jem, the stable boy, was close by her side, and he was certain it came from no human hand.

The result of these fears was a resolution that the male portion of the establishment should sit up together till day-light, armed with pokers and bludgeons, an old sabre, a pair of pistols, and brandy and water, to protect themselves from the ghosts.

The women, for the most part, huddled together in one room, and hurrying to bed, laid their heads under the bed-clothes for safety. Mrs. Alsop induced Mrs. Watkins, the cook, as being the most corpulent of the party, and therefore the most courageous, to keep her company in her own room. But the night was full of terrors. Juno, the dog, howled in a way which thrilled every soul with awe. A great owl hooted in the old stag-headed oak. There was a rushing, and squealing, and skirting behind the wainscot, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been assigned to rats, but in a haunted house came evidently from spirits; and Mrs. Alsop and Mrs. Watkins (the latter notwithstanding the magnitude of her figure) were nearly driven out of their senses, by a great flop against the window, just as the clock struck twelve; while, at the same instant, something they saw through the glass, which, though it assumed to the eye the form of a stray pigeon, Mrs. Watkins felt sure herself, and had quite convinced Mrs. Alsop, was the spirit of old Thomas Timms, the carter, who had been thrown from the shafts of his waggon ten days before, and killed, and

was now come to warn them. Mrs. Watkins was certain of this, because the night before old Thomas met with the accident, his wife had been wakened just in the same way by a pigeon, which flopped three times against her window.

Had Emma only been warned of the necessity of a Lethe wish, all this would have been easily remedied at half past six o'clock the following morning. But, alas! this most needful instruction had been neglected, and now to the mysterious terrors of the night had been added the still more mysterious marvels of the present day.

The mere fact of a strange breakfast might indeed have been accepted without any inconvenient surprise, according to the Fairy's promise, but when the dishes were finally carried into the kitchen, Mrs. Watkins's natural sense and taste had revolted from the unquestionable snails and slugs; and when the delicate thighs of the frogs were examined, and pronounced, by all those who ventured to touch them, to be neither fish, flesh, nor fowl—when the tails of the mice were found in the pie—when Mrs. Alsop had smelt the chicken stuffed with asafœtida—and Mr. Gray, though with fear and trembling, had tasted with the tip of his tongue, the wine flavoured with turpentine and sea water—the case was made clear beyond a doubt. None but witches could have concocted such abominations—nothing but witchcraft have brought

them into a Christian kitchen. A council of war was held at once, and an unanimous resolution passed not to spend another night under the haunted roof.

Lady Lloyd looked at me with dismay.

'What are we to do? Could you speak to them? Try and see if you can persuade them,' she said. 'Sir Lloyd is not in the house, and I cannot imagine what will become of us.'

I could not of course refuse to undertake the mission, though with little hope of success; and accordingly we agreed that Lady Lloyd should retire and leave to my rhetorical powers the dispersion of the threatened storm. I debated with myself whether I should hold a privy council with Mrs. Alsop, Mr. Gray, and Mr. Haverstone, and trust to them to manipulate the rest into sympathy with our resolutions, or should at once convoke a popular assembly of the whole household. And I could not hesitate. If you want to tell the truth adopt the tête-à-tête. But, if you are obliged to tell a fib, convene a meeting —if possible a mob. The mental eyes as well as the bodily eyes are wonderfully obstructed in a crowd. Nothing is so easily imposed upon as a popular assembly.

Accordingly, as I ushered Lady Lloyd, as a queen, out of the room, I summoned the commons into it. I was by this time, after so many communications with the Fairy, and so many necessities for concealing

facts, and suggesting, if not telling fibs, a great adept in the art of deceiving others. But I would beg you all to observe that I took care, as far at least as I was able, not actually to affirm and declare a word which was not true, but only by exclamations and questions, general reflections and suggestions, to insinuate to my hearers. This is the new modern way of telling lies. If those who listened to me did imagine things which were not contained expressly in my words, if they did draw inferences, the result was their act not mine. And I could not be responsible for the falsehood.

'I must not take too much merit to myself,' said Uncle Peter, 'for this plan; I had learnt a great deal from others. I had watched the manœuvres of the leader of a political party, when compelled to pledge himself to promises never meant to be performed, and to a policy which it might become convenient to abandon. I had studied the mode in which candidates answer questions on the hustings, and a chancellor of the exchequer can contrive to shift the pea of his yearly balance from the thimble of deficit to the thimble of surplus. I had marked how a board of directors could report upon an insolvent railway or a spendthrift joint stock company. Kings also had been my instructors in the art of proclaiming peace, while preparing for war; in interpreting the language of treaties, and the stipulations of conventions. Some knowledge and experience I had also derived from

the House of Commons. I had studied many reports of committees, especially on the state of Ireland, and learnt how to examine witnesses, so as to elicit but one conclusion; and how to dress up facts, so as to avoid saying anything unpleasant to parties whom we are afraid of offending. I had witnessed also the admission of certain persons to privileges and powers under the most solemn and stringent oaths, that those powers should never be employed by them for a particular purpose; and then the discovery that the oath meant nothing. Nor had I derived less information on the mystery of equivocation, from certain doctrines as to the interpretation of articles, the binding force of oaths, and the restriction of formularies, by which it is now made easy, without any violation of truth or honour, to take an office with a solemn promise to fight for one's king and one's country, and retain it conscientiously for the purpose of handing both over to their deadly enemy. In short, I had seen something of the nineteenth century, in which we are become so free, so enlightened, so liberal, so charitable, that oaths are now perfectly useless, and words mean everything and nothing. Accordingly, I summoned, as I said, the domestics into the room, and as the fitting commencement of my task, threw myself back in my chair, as they entered, with seemingly irrepressible laughter. A laugh is almost always the best way of dissipating the threatenings of inferiors;

and firing a gun at a water-spout is sure to bring it down.

'What,' I said, 'is the meaning, Gray, of this ludicrous nonsense which you have been talking? Lady Lloyd really cannot listen to it. What is it all about?'

'Oh, sir!' exclaimed a chorus of voices, 'we're bewitched, sir; we're bewitched; and the house is haunted.'

'And we heard noises, sir, last night,' said the housemaid.

'And I was slapped on the back,' cried the dairymaid.

'And Mrs. Alsop and I saw him with our own eyes,' cried Mrs Watkins.

'Stop! stop!' I exclaimed, once more relapsing into my apparently uncontrollable laugh. 'Let me have one at a time. Now, Gray, speak for the rest. What is the matter?'

Gray, accordingly, intelligibly and respectfully, though with some little trepidation and exaggeration, laid the case before me; and as the marvellous facts—the singing and music, the dripping clothes, my sudden recovery, the appearance and disappearance of the rockwork, the blackening of the water, and the breakfast of slugs and snails, were all true, and substantiated by credible concurrent witnesses; and with the exception of the hypothesis that the appari-

tion of the white pigeon at the window was the ghost of the poor carter, there was nothing which I could dispute or deny, I should certainly have been perplexed for an answer if I had not been well instructed in German logic; the logic which we hope to see introduced into England, in the place of the worn-out system of proving or disproving facts by testimony, which wastes so much time, and gives such trouble in our courts of justice.

Happily with this logic I was tolerably well acquainted, and I therefore threw myself again back in my chair, gazed on the principal members of the assembly with as much amazement and contempt as I could assume, and exclaimed—

'What, you, Gray!—you, a sensible, educated man—and Mrs. Alsop, and you also Mr. Haverstone—your wife too having charge of the school—all so trusted and esteemed, you to talk of witches and ghosts! If it had been that boy there'—and I pointed to the stable boy—'or one of the ragged children in the lane, I should not have been surprised. But I am indeed amazed to hear such stuff from you. In England, in the nineteenth century, when we have railways, and steam-engines, and the electric telegraph, and the Atlantic cable, besides the *Times* newspaper, and the British Association, I should have thought such folly was exploded. Are you sure,' I said laughingly to Mrs. Alsop, 'that it was not a fairy that

caused all these wonderful things. When you are imagining such nonsense, you may as well introduce a fairy as a witch. Surely,' and I turned to Gray, 'you know, or ought to know, from your own inward feeling, your self-consciousness or *Selbstbewusstsein*, as the Germans elegantly call it, that there can be nothing supernatural in the world.'

I quoted German, knowing that a hard word not understood is a very powerful instrument of persuasion, and remembering how Mr. O'Connell had quelled the fury even of an Irish fishwoman, by calling her a 'parallelogram.'

'Have you ever,' I continued, addressing the party generally, 'seen a witch or a ghost?'

'I don't know, sir, exactly,' faltered the two ladies who had been terrified by the apparition of the pigeon.

The rest were obliged to confess that they never had.

'Well, then,' I said, 'does not your own experience tell you that there can be no such things?'

'But, sir, other people have,' faltered Gray.

'Other people!' I exclaimed. 'But how can other people have seen what could not exist? If you have never seen a ghost or a spirit, it proves there are no such things; and if there are no such things, how can they have been seen?'

'But people say they have seen them,' persisted

Gray, though evidently sinking under the weight of my syllogism.

'Yes, Gray,' I said, 'they say, and perhaps think they have. But sensible men do not trust to what other people say, but to their own experience. It is quite certain that you never saw a ghost, but it is not certain that those who say they have are telling you the truth, however much they may intend to do so. We will just test this question of evidence. I will examine Mrs. Alsop and Mrs. Watkins touching the apparition of the pigeon, and I think we shall find that, without the slightest intention to deceive, they have not given us quite a correct account of what they saw. Mrs. Alsop, will you be good enough to tell us again what it was you did see?'

'Oh, sir!' said Mrs. Alsop, turning pale with the reminiscence, 'it was a great white thing at the window.'

'But Mrs. Alsop,' I replied, 'answer me one question. If there is one physiological phenomena clearly established' (I again used hard words purposely to occupy her mind with discovering the meaning) 'it is, that when human beings, especially females, are in bed, and alarmed at what they consider supernatural appearances, they put their heads under the bed-clothes. You acknowledge that you did it,' I added, turning to the housemaid and the other women servants.

'Yes, sir,' was the faltering reply.

'And you, yourself, Mrs. Alsop, and Mrs. Watkins, honestly tell me, did you or did you not last night do the same?'

'Yes, sir, we did,' they both said; 'we were very much frightened, and we thought it safest.'

'And how, then, was it possible for you to see anything at the window? See at once what a difficulty we are involved in.' But without waiting for Mrs. Alsop's explanation—if she had one—I turned to Mrs. Watkins and said—'Now, Mrs. Watkins, what was it you heard?'

'Oh, sir!' she faltered out, 'it was a great flop against the window.'

'Ah!' I said, 'here is another discrepancy. Mrs. Alsop and Mrs. Watkins are both in the same room, and in the same bed; one says she saw something at the window, but heard no noise; and the other that she heard a noise but did not see anything. How can that be possible if both incidents occurred together?' and I turned triumphantly to Mr. Gray, and appealed to his common sense. 'No,' I continued, 'there is but one solution for such contradictory accounts. Far be it from me to suggest that either Mrs. Watkins or Mrs. Alsop has the slightest intention to deceive. They are both, I know, most excellent persons, but they were excited—under the influence of a strong imagination; doubtless the tension of

the nervous system produced a subjective irritability, which caused a morbid action of the cerebral functions, and thus projected into objectivity the development of their inner consciousness. This is the only way to account for their contradictory statements.'

Mr. Gray, who, notwithstanding the fascination of my hard words, still retained some portion of his common sense, here ventured to interpose.

'If you please, sir,' he observed, 'Mrs. Alsop did not say she did not hear the noise, nor Mrs. Watkins that she did not see the thing at the window. They only answered, each of them, the question you put, sir. And Mrs. Alsop says she did hear the noise, and that was what made her take her head out from under the bed-clothes, and then she saw the thing at the window.'

'Gray,' I replied, 'Mrs. Alsop told me nothing of what she heard, and Mrs. Watkins nothing of what she saw. And what they did not tell of course they did not know; for if they had known it, it is certain, by psychological laws, that they would have told it. And since, if there had been a noise or a figure, it must have been heard or seen by both, and was not so heard or seen, therefore it could not have existed. And Gray,' I added, 'let me give you a warning. These attempts of yours to reconcile the discrepancies in the accounts of these excellent persons is not creditable to your own love of truth, it argues a

desire to twist and imagine explanations for their erroneous statements. It is much more honest to regard these statements at once as either errors or delusions. But we will proceed with the investigation. Mrs. Watkins pray repeat once more what it was you heard.'

'Oh, sir! it was a strange kind of noise, like a great flop against the window.'

'It was a sudden bump, sir,' interposed Mrs. Alsop.

'Bump!' I said; 'but a bump is not the same thing as a flop. The two sounds are quite different. This is another discrepancy. And what was it you saw, Mrs. Alsop?'

'It was a great white thing, sir, with a sort of wing.'

'With two wings,' interposed Mrs. Watkins.

'What!' I exclaimed, 'one says there was one wing and the other that there were two.'

'Mrs. Alsop did not say there was only one wing, sir,' observed Gray; 'she only said it had a sort of wing; she meant of course something like a bird's wing.'

'Oh, Gray,' I replied gravely, 'beware of any more sophistical attempts to support your own cause by reconciling these contradictory accounts. One is not two, and two is not one; Mrs. Alsop said one wing, and Mrs. Watkins two wings.'

'But Mrs. Alsop did not say one wing only, sir,' persisted Gray.

'Silence, Gray,' I said, severely, for I found he was becoming troublesome. 'You must not interpose your remarks to check the penetrating force of critical reasoning. Tell me,' and I turned to Mrs. Alsop, 'at what o'clock did this occur?'

'It was just twelve o'clock, sir,' said Mrs. Alsop.

'It was ten minutes past twelve,' exclaimed Mrs. Watkins.

'Another discrepancy,' and I lifted up my hands in amazement. 'Are you sure, Mrs. Alsop, that it was twelve o'clock?'

'Yes, sir, as sure as that I am standing here, for I heard the stable clock strike that very moment.'

'It was ten minutes past twelve,' murmured Mrs. Watkins, 'for I looked at my watch.'

'Mrs. Alsop,' I said, 'and Mrs. Watkins, the further I examine the more I am perplexed. This insisting on the exact time, and giving each other to the face a direct contradiction, is so very strange, that I really have no other resource but to believe the whole story an imagination, I do not like to call it an invention. You must own it to be so yourselves; a child can see the discrepancies which you actually go out of your way to bring before us.'

'The stable clock, sir,' interposed Gray, 'is set to

railway time, and that makes just the difference of five minutes between it and the Hall clock.'

'And Mrs. Watkins goes by the Hall clock, and sets her watch five minutes too fast,' said Mrs. Alsop. 'She does it that dinner may be punctual.'

'Let us have no more of these attempts at explanation,' I replied, 'they only make the matter worse. To get at the truth I must ask Mrs. Alsop and Mrs. Watkins a question separately.' I drew Mrs. Alsop aside—

'Tell me,' I said, 'what is the position of the window at which you declare you saw this appearance?'

'Full in front of me, sir,' was the reply. 'I had only to lift my head out of the bed-clothes and there I saw it.'

'Very good,' I answered. 'Now, Mrs. Watkins,' and taking her also apart, I repeated the question—'What was the position of the window?'

'At my back, sir,' said Mrs. Watkins.

I turned from her and addressed the assembly in a tone of surprise, not unmingled with indignation. 'The whole tale,' I said, 'is evidently an imagination. Both the witnesses are in the same bed, one says the window was at her back, the other that it was before her face. How can this be possible? It is a palpable—a monstrous contradiction.'

'Mrs. Alsop, sir,' said my man, Wyatt, 'says she

was lying on her right side, and Mrs. Watkins on her left.'

'Wyatt,' I replied, 'you are blind and credulous: you put unreasoning faith in others, and presume to suggest your own theories in opposition to the severe but necessary criticism of my inner-consciousness. Does any one else,' I added, looking round the room, 'know anything about this mysterious appearance?'

'Yes, please, sir,' said Abraham, the young stable boy, 'I seed two white pigeons this morning, sitting on the top of the chimbley.'

'Ah!' I exclaimed, 'another version of the same story. At what o'clock, Abraham, did you see these two pigeons on the chimney?'

'Half-past six, sir,' said Abraham.

'Halb sieben, zur,' said a voice, which I recognised as that of a young German lad employed in the bakehouse.

'Half-past seven!' I cried. 'Mrs. Alsop sees one white bird at her window at twelve o'clock at night, and this, in Abraham's account, turns into two pigeons on the chimney at half-past six, and this half-past six becomes in another version of the same story, half-past seven. I hope,' I added, turning to the gaping listeners, 'you will now be able to judge for yourselves what credit you are to give to such tales.'

'Halb sieben, sir,' said Gray, 'is the boy's German

way of saying half-past six. He can't speak good English yet.'

'Oh!' I said, endeavouring to cover a little confusion at my own mistake by affecting indifference. 'Well, I am glad to find that these two boys at least agree in their account. But there is a prodigious difference between their account and Mrs. Alsop's. To see two pigeons on a chimney at half-past six in the morning, is a very different thing from seeing a ghost at a window at twelve o'clock at night.'

'But, sir,' interrupted Mrs. Alsop firmly, but respectfully, 'I never said I saw a ghost at a window. I said, sir, that we saw something white, which made a noise against the window. I don't say it did not come into my mind that it might be a ghost, but I never said it was.'

'Well, Mrs. Alsop,' I answered, 'I am glad to find you are so far reasonable. You say you saw something white at your window, which doubtless was really a white pigeon, and the story got abroad, and these two boys heard it, and fancied they saw two white pigeons on the chimney. In their excited state of mind, such a delusion was very possible. I have known a multitude of intelligent persons who, in the agony of their grief for the death of a dear friend, under the most affecting of all possible circumstances, were so carried away by the excitement of their sorrow, and the highly nervous irritability caused by

it, that they all imagined their beloved friend was restored to life, and was living with them as before, to their great joy and delight. And the delusion actually lasted, and was their great consolation to the day of their death. So that nothing is more likely than that either the boys, hearing of the pigeon at the window, fancied they saw two pigeons afterwards, or that some one had been telling stories in the servants' hall about pigeons, and everyone's imagination being excited, they thought they saw pigeons everywhere. It is evident that both the facts asserted are in reality one and the same fact, dressed up in different ways by popular rumour.

'But, please, sir,' asked the provokingly obstinate Mr. Gray, 'couldn't they both be true?'

'Of course not,' I said; 'who ever heard of two facts so like each other ever occurring in the same night or day?'

'I don't see,' persisted the irritating Gray, 'what good anyone would gain by telling a lie about such a matter.'

'Gray,' I said, 'the human mind naturally delights in the indulgence of the imagination—in innocent deception. What is more common than for a number of good and religious men to join together for the purpose of inventing an extraordinary tale, and then palming it upon the world as true; and even attesting it by the most solemn oaths; and in their enthu-

siasm persisting in the tale to the day of their death, and, indeed, suffering themselves to be tortured and burnt, rather than acknowledge that they were propagating a falsehood?'

'We are going to give up our places,' murmured the servants, 'but we wouldn't do it for a falsehood.'

'Not for what you believe to be a falsehood,' I said; 'and yet I have heard of persons who have done something of the kind under the influence of enthusiasm. Suppose now you, Mr. Gray, Mrs. Alsop, the stable-boy, and the German boy, and all the rest of you had read and thought much of the misery of your fellow-creatures, and were resolved to go forth to the world and teach them what was true and right. I can imagine your saying to yourselves, that as you had no money, no great education, and did not understand the language of other countries, there would be no hope of doing any good, except by kindling people's imagination and enthusiasm by some extraordinary stories of supernatural appearances, apparitions, spirits, and the like. With these you might do much. The stable-boy and the German baker's boy might go to Oxford and Cambridge, and spread their doctrines amongst the heads of the universities. Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Alsop might set off for Paris on a mission to the Emperor. Hobbs, the groom, might go to the Pope. Mr. Haverstone might choose Japan. It would be a very grand idea, and no one would have a right to complain of you if you en-

deavoured to spread truth by the help of the imagination. Such things have often been done before.'

'I don't understand, sir,' said Gray quietly.

'Of course not,' I replied; 'I am only talking of what might be—only reminding you that enthusiasm leads people to say and do very wonderful things, and that a philosophical mind can have no difficulty in accounting for these tales about spirits and ghosts and witches, which my friend Professor Nichtsglaubiger of Tubingen has proved by his inner consciousness are things that have no existence.'

'I don't see why we should give up our places for a lie,' again repeated Gray.

'Perhaps not,' I replied, 'and yet again it would not be very unnatural if you were to do so. At least it is certain that persons can do no good without setting an example of self-sacrifice; and if you had any such great object in view as I have suggested, it would be a striking example of self-sacrifice if you found yourselves at Pekin or Nova Zembla, without money or friends, and ignorant of the language, when you might be comfortably seated in the servants' hall at Brooklyn. Such an example, accompanied by the supernatural tales, would have a great effect upon the world, and would no doubt induce them to embrace the love of truth, which you would be wholly unable to inculcate without a common agreement to tell what is not true.'

The unfortunate servants gazed at me in bewilderment, not unmixed with alarm, and taking advantage of their perplexity, and in the vague hope of so entirely drawing them away from the original question as to postpone its consideration till we could take measures to ensure the oblivion of the past, I went on hurriedly—

'Don't imagine for an instant, my good friends, that I consider you are capable of telling a deliberate lie for selfish purposes. It would be quite possible, indeed, for great truths to be veiled under these simple assertions.'

'It's all true,' muttered the stable-boy.

'Exactly so,' I said; 'it may be all true, and yet not true. If you were wishing, for instance, to impart philosophical ideas to the world, no doubt you would do so under what is called an allegorical myth. In that case the white figure at Mrs. Alsop's window, and the two pigeons on the chimney, though they never existed, would represent white-robed Innocence presenting itself suddenly in the midst of surrounding darkness, and loudly and solemnly (this would be the meaning of the flop or bump) startling from its sleep the human intellect and inner consciousness, smothered under the integuments of superficial and superfluous superstition—as Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Alsop were symbolically described as covered with the bed-clothes and blankets. In like manner the

two white pigeons seen by Abraham and the German baker-boy would be a picture of conjugal harmony and domestic happiness; and as seven is a perfect number, their having been seen at half-past six, or "halb sieben," would elegantly and expressively typify that near approach to perfect happiness which domestic happiness is sure to realise. You understand me, Abraham, no doubt?'

'No, I doan't, sir,' replied Abraham, sturdily. 'I don't know nothing about what you are talking of. They was two pigeons, and nothing domestic about them.'

'I fear your education has been neglected,' I said, 'and you cannot perceive that you have given an objective reality to the creation of a subjective fancy.'

'I don't object to nothing, sir,' said Abraham, 'only I saw the two pigeons on the chimney, and so did he,' pointing to the baker-boy.

'And it isn't the pigeons, sir,' interposed Gray, 'but the music.'

'And my black beard and whiskers,' said Wyatt.

'And the slugs and snails,' exclaimed Mrs. Watkins.

'Very singular!' I said, as if half speaking to myself; 'very interesting! I must make a note of the phenomenon for the Psychological Section of the Anthropological Society. One knows that the same kind of hallucination prevailed some 1800 years ago. Great

truths were then taught under a mythical form, and men were so impressed by what they heard that they really believed the fairy tales to be true; and some persons even thought they had witnessed the facts they related. And I have noticed before this that persons often repeat a lie till at last they believe it to be true, as George IV. is said to have believed that he led the decisive charge of cavalry at the battle of Waterloo. But I never before met with so strong an instance of complete delusion. It will greatly confirm the view which Professor Nichtsglaubiger has taken of the origin of belief in miracles. Nature has evidently formed man in this, as in so many other instances, upon the principle of contradiction. On his reason she has impressed the absolute and indisputable truth that in the world miracles or anything supernatural are wholly impossible, and on his fancy she has impressed an equally overwhelming inclination to believe in them.'

I was proceeding still further with my philosophy, but I was interrupted by Gray, who, during my soliloquy, had quietly held a little communication with the other leaders of the assembly, and now addressed me with great respect, but with no less decision.

'If you will be good enough to excuse me, sir; but we are no scholars, as you are, and we don't quite understand what you say; only, sir, we know very well what we have all heard and seen with our own

senses, and we can't be any way argued out of them. They are things which were never heard of before, and we can't stay in a house where they are likely to happen.'

A murmur of assent from the whole body proved too clearly that all my logic, alas ! and all my philosophy had proved vain. I was in great alarm—we were drifting back to the dangerous topics from which I had been so earnestly striving to lead their thoughts away.

I took out my watch, and again forcing a laugh, I said—'Now this is too absurd—when I have been showing you how entirely fanciful and imaginative all these stories of yours are, to persist in repeating them. I really have not time to listen to them. I have an engagement at half-past twelve, and it is just that now. But if you, Gray and Wyatt and Mrs. Alsop, are not satisfied, you shall come to my room in two hours' time, and we will have a little more talk upon the subject. In the meanwhile you must all remember that you have a very good and kind master and mistress, and that you will put them to great inconvenience, and do yourselves a great deal of harm, by giving up your places in this sudden way. No one will believe a word you say, because everyone knows that witches and spirits don't exist. So now just leave me for the present, and keep quiet, and you shall all be quite satisfied that everything is right.'

Without waiting for any reply, I rose from my seat, waved my hand as a sign of the dismissal of the assembly, and hastened to Lady Lloyd.

I found her in the greatest anxiety, waiting the result of my efforts. I was obliged to confess my failure, and yet in one sense I had not failed. I had gained time, which was the one thing needed. We were, I hoped, safe for the next two hours; but in order to prevent any further application to Lady Lloyd, I begged her to retire to her room under the plea of a severe headache—(my conscience was quite easy now as regarded these small fibs)—whilst I betook myself to the shrubbery, to prepare myself as best I could, by the aid of German philosophy, to prove still more clearly, that facts were not facts, and realities only imaginations.

CHAPTER XVI.

RATIONAL EXPLANATIONS.

THE two hours seemed very short, interrupted as they were by the necessity of appearing at luncheon, and talking upon indifferent subjects, whilst Gray waited upon us with a countenance ominous of evil, and scanned every dish as if he expected a sudden metamorphosis of the fricasséed chicken into hashed toads and vipers. And it was, I confess, with considerable trepidation and self-distrust that, at the appointed hour, I returned to the library, determined to make trial of a manœuvre which, though it could not but be dangerous when attempted unexpectedly in the face of the enemy, was nevertheless the only one that suggested itself as affording any prospect of extricating Lady Lloyd from her most painful and awkward position.

It was indeed a difficult operation to attempt to prove, nearly in the same breath, that certain facts never had and never could have occurred, and also that they had occurred, and through very simple and

natural causes; but philosophy had before solved this problem, and had shown that certain wonderful events, which it was anxious to discredit, had both never taken place at all, and never could take place; and also that they had taken place without any reason to wonder at them. I therefore did not despair, and as Gray, Wyatt, and Mrs. Alsop, with the addition of Mr. Haverstone and Mrs. Watkins, again appeared before me, I addressed them in a totally changed tone.

'So, Gray,' I said, with another attempt at a hearty laugh, 'you will none of you be persuaded out of your senses, and I can't make you believe that what you all saw and heard never took place?'

'No, sir,' was the answer, echoed by Wyatt and Mrs. Alsop.

'Well,' I replied, 'I am very glad to see you so sensible. I wanted to make an experiment, to see whether it was possible to argue a plain honest Englishman out of his senses. Some people think it possible, but I do not. So now I will just say, at once, that it is all true. I don't mean merely the pigeons—of course I believe that, as I am sure Mrs. Alsop is incapable of telling a falsehood, and the boys would, as you observed, Gray, have no object in doing so—but the singing, and the growth of your black beard and whiskers, Wyatt—and my illness, and the changes in the garden, and the appearances of the snails and slugs—it did all happen—I quite own it.'

My acknowledgment evidently afforded great satisfaction, but I would not give opportunity for remarks, and continued—'Now I will explain to you this strange mystery. I do not wonder at your being surprised, or a little frightened, but when I make it all clear to you, you will see how little cause you have to attribute anything astonishing to witches, ghosts, or goblins. I must beg you, however, to give me your careful attention. You know'—I looked round upon them with an air of grave importance, such as befitted a scientific lecturer—'that in this day many wonderful things can be done, which a few years back we should have considered impossible. We can go from Rayadil to London in four hours; we can walk under the Thames without getting wet; and we can say 'How d'ye do?' to a friend in America, and receive his answer in an hour. In former days people who could do such things would have been burnt alive as witches or wizards. But we, who have seen that they are not only possible but quite easy, have learnt from this experience, that when we see other things which appear to be supernatural or miraculous, we are not to attribute them to anything of a spiritual kind, but to what are called the laws of nature. By these laws everything is governed. They are never interrupted or suspended or changed. The whole world is in fact a machine, and it moves upon rails, and never goes off the rails, as it certainly would do if anything miracu-

lous were to interfere with it. I hope you understand me?' I added.

The reply was a little doubtful.

'I will explain myself by an illustration,' I continued. 'What, Gray, would be the consequence if that capital clock in the hall were meddled with every moment, instead of being allowed to go on steadily by itself? We should never know the time of day, should we?'

'No, sir,' said Gray, 'but it does not really go by itself, as you seem to say the world does; for I am obliged to come and wind it up every Monday, and the clockmaker sends a man to clean it every year. It does not clean itself, or go of itself, as I used, when I was a child, to fancy my father's old clock did, because it was always wound up when I was asleep.'

'Yes—but—but—' I coughed and hem'd and found myself hesitating awkwardly, 'but winding up does not prevent its going regularly; I mean it does not alter the law by which it works.'

'No, sir,' said Gray, 'because it was made so from the beginning. The clockmaker intended it should be wound up once a week.'

'Exactly so,' I said, 'exactly so. You see therefore there is nothing supernatural, whether the clock moves by its own machinery, or is wound up, as you say, every week by some one else.'

'Yes, sir,' persisted the provoking Gray, 'but any-

how it does not wind itself up any more than I suppose the world does.'

'No,' I said, 'of course it does not. It is part of the clockmaker's original plan that at certain times he himself or some one appointed by himself should do for the clock what it cannot do for itself.'

'Yes, sir,' said Mrs. Alsop, 'that is just like what I heard my lady say to the school-children one day, when she was talking to them about the wonderful stories in the——'

But here I was obliged to stop Mrs. Alsop's officious reminiscences.

'I must beg you to be silent, Mrs. Alsop,' I said. 'What I wish to explain to you all now is that the world in which we are living is not made to be ever wound up, or ever get out of order. It goes on for ever and ever, just as if a clock was made which never required to be touched again from the moment it was first finished. If you could study, as I have studied, the works of the learned Germans—Professor Entwickelung, Professor Bewusstseyn, and Professor Nichtsglaubiger—you would see that this is the case, and you would understand why there can be nothing supernatural in the world.'

I looked at the faces of my audience to see what effect I was producing upon them, but they did not seem at all satisfied. They had evidently been brought up in unenlightened schools, where the teachers were

compelled to instruct their pupils in the old stereotyped form of doctrine which Englishmen used to think truth.

'May I make bold, sir,' said Mr. Gray, 'to ask how you and these German gentlemen know this?'

'Know what?' I asked.

'Know, sir, that the world has always gone on by itself, and has never been touched since the creation.'

'Physical science has discovered it,' I said; 'it has proved it beyond a doubt.'

'Please, sir,' asked Wyatt, 'what is the gentleman's name?'

'Science,' I said, 'physical science; but it is not a gentleman—it means a knowledge of the laws of Nature. And the gentlemen who have examined all those laws know that they have never been meddled with or altered since the beginning of the world.'

'What wonderful clever gentlemen they must be!' observed Mrs. Alsop, reverently and admiringly.

'Yes, Mrs. Alsop,' I said, in a condescending tone, 'they are very clever. They are the glory of the nineteenth century, the pride of Europe!'

'And did they all go together in a body to discover this?' asked Mrs. Alsop, emboldened by the approving tone in which I had encouraged her expression of admiration for the lights of the scientific world.

'Some imes,' I said, 'they all meet together. Last year there was a great assembly of philosophers at

Birmingham—this year they will probably meet somewhere else.'

'They must be wonderful-looking people,' observed Mrs. Alsop, with a reverential sigh; 'I wish I had seen them.'

'No,' I said, 'not at all wonderful; very like you, and me, and the rest of the world, Mrs. Alsop, and, to speak the truth, not much handsomer than their fellow-creatures.'

'They must be very old,' said Wyatt—he spoke in a sceptical, uncomfortable tone—'to have known everything that has happened since the beginning of the world!'

'And they must have wonderful eyes,' said Gray, 'and be able to see in the dark, and thousands of miles off, if they can answer for everything which has happened everywhere at the same time.'

'Wyatt and Gray,' I said severely, 'you are speaking in a way which I do not approve of. Of course these gentlemen do not pretend each of them to have seen everything;—but they take different subjects. Professor Smith has examined the sun and moon, Professor Jones the earth, Professor Robinson the stars, Dr. Hobbes the winds, Dr. Davis the animals; Mr. Buckle has gone carefully through the history of all the ancient and modern nations; and Dr. Darwin has shown how easy it is for worms and beetles to become elephants or men, eagles or angels, if they only happen

to be fortunate in intermarrying under favourable though rather rare circumstances, which will allow them to realise their wishes without interruption. And they find that everywhere everything is carried on by unbroken laws, and if they meet with or hear of anything which seems to have been brought about in a different way, they are quite sure either that it never took place at all, or else that the laws must have been the same, though they do not appear so to us. Thus, you see, there can be no exception to the general rule, and no such thing as what we call a miracle, or a supernatural occurrence.'

I paused; but there was no response of assent except an admiring sigh from Mrs. Alsop.

Wyatt remarked, rather in an undertone, that he had heard a lecture once from a gentleman who said there were thousands and thousands of stars that nobody knew anything about. Of course he must have meant nobody but the gentlemen who went to Birmingham—they, no doubt, knew all that happened in all the stars.

'And all that ever happened since the creation,' murmured Gray.

'They knew sufficient,' I said, 'to justify them in a general induction;—in inferring an universal from a particular.'

I thought I might venture on this bit of bad logic,

as it was so little likely they could understand the words I used.

But in that stupid annoying spirit which had pervaded all Gray's remarks, he asked me—though very respectfully—if I would explain to him what I meant by my last words.

'Your own excellent sense, Gray,' I replied (in the permanent-opposition state of his mind I thought it better to be complimentary), 'will at once perceive my meaning if I give you an illustration. This morning Sir Lloyd wanted to know if the wine in a certain bin would be fit for drinking at the archery meeting. You tried one or two bottles and were satisfied. From the state of these two bottles you argued—or, in the language of logical philosophy, you drew a general induction.'

'No, sir,' said Gray, 'I should have been a great fool if I had done so. There were two dozen of bad claret in the same bin.'

'Well,' I replied, a little impatiently, 'I don't mean all the wine in the same bin, but all the same wine (twenty dozen I know were bought at the same time); you know all these were good.'

'No, sir, indeed I did not,' said Gray, pertinaciously; 'some might be corked, and some of the bottles might not be clear. I did not bottle the wine myself. Very often when the sample bottle is good

the rest are not so. It happened so only the other day.'

'Well,' I said, though I was rather perplexed for an answer, 'there are no doubt cases in which what we call a general induction may be drawn too hastily. You can only infer that a million of things will turn out so or so, because two or three of them turn out so when they are all exactly of the same kind. Similar causes always produce similar effects, and similar effects always follow similar causes. But then you must be sure that they are similar.'

'And that is just what I can't be, sir,' said Gray, 'in regard to that wine. I can't see into the corks, and some may be rotten; and wine which will keep good in one part of the cellar will not keep good in another, where it is warmer or colder. I hope the wine Sir Lloyd has ordered for the archery meeting will turn out good, but I should not like to answer for every bottle, especially as Mr. Wallis, the wine-merchant, warned me that he had put some bottles of Burgundy in the same batch with the claret.'

'But of course, Gray,' I said, 'in a case like that the two causes would not be the same, and therefore the effect would not be the same.'

'That is what I meant, sir,' replied Gray, 'and that is why I am not so sure that because one thing happens in this way to-day, all things must happen in the same way every day. Can you tell me, sir, how many

things have happened since the beginning of the world?'

'Gray,' I said, angrily, 'how can you ask such a foolish question? Why every moment, even here in this room, there are occurring thousands, or rather millions, of facts. Every movement of every grain of dust, every vibration in the air is a fact, or an effect produced by some cause. And how can you ask me to tell you how many facts have occurred since the beginning of the world.'

'Please, sir, how long ago is it since the beginning of the world,' said Mrs. Alsop, still thirsting for information.

'Well,' I said, 'we used to believe that the world had lasted about 6,000 years; but now we know, from what Professor Mills discovered when he was digging a hole in his garden the other day, that it must have taken 20,000 or 30,000 or perhaps a million of years to make the earth; for the professor found in his cabbage-bed a piece of flint and an old iron spoon which he was sure must have been deposited there at least 10,000 years ago.'

'How wonderful!' exclaimed Mrs. Alsop, lifting up her eyes in admiration.

'Well, sir,' said the provoking Gray, 'I'm no scholar, but I think I'd rather speak cautiously about so many things that I know nothing about.'

'Yes, Gray,' I replied, 'and I should hesitate too, if it were not that Professor Entwickelung of Tübingen

has written a book about it, so clever, and deep, and full of knowledge, that even his own pupils cannot understand it. His authority is sufficient for me, especially as all that he says is confirmed by Professor Bewusstseyn.'

'Well, sir,' said Wyatt, 'I never heard of Professor Wickling nor of Professor Busting before; but when I was a boy at school our clergyman, Dr. Butler, used to show us that what he said was true, because it was something which other people had heard and seen with their own eyes and ears. But then he never talked out of his own head, or in a way we could not understand.'

'Perhaps he was not clever enough,' I said.

'Perhaps so, sir. But the judge at the assizes last year said the same: I had to be witness against Jem Harris for stealing a watch. I knew it was he that did it, because he was such a bad fellow and had such a name in the country; but when I said I felt quite sure of it, the judge glared at me with his great eyes, and told me I was not put there to say what I felt sure of, but what I had heard and seen; and if I did not answer properly he'd commit me. I was never so frightened in my life, sir, as I was then.'

'Very possibly, Wyatt,' I said; 'but things are changing now. Dr. Butler's days were old days, and he did not understand German; and as for the judges, they will soon learn differently. I have no doubt that in the next session of Parliament a Bill will be brought

in to reform our Courts of Law, and then the witnesses will only be asked what they think and feel, and what their inner-consciousness tells them, not what they have heard and seen. That evidence is very well for common people, but it is not fit for philosophers.'

I spoke as if I was quite certain of the truth of my assertions, yet I could not help being staggered and baffled by the resistance which these stupid English minds offered to my German philosophy. But I thought I had better sum up my conclusions as proved beyond a doubt.

'You see, then,' I said, 'it is quite certain that although all these extraordinary things occurred to you there was really nothing supernatural in them; nothing but what always happens under the same circumstances by the laws of Nature, and you need not be at all afraid of ghosts, or witches, or fairies, or spirits, or indeed anything of that kind.'

As I glanced around me when I said this, I perceived to my dismay that heads were shaken and eyes looking at me with a very distrustful nonconforming aspect.

'I don't know,' said Gray, as the spokesman of the party; 'I am not so sure. If you can tell us, sir, how these things did happen, why then it would be different. Only we never heard of the like before being done by any common man or woman, and therefore it must have been done by spirits. Unless, sir—

will you please make me sing again as I did yesterday morning, or show to me how I was made to sing?'

'And how the hair grew upon my face?' said Wyatt.

'And how the trunks of trees and the rocks were brought and carried away without any waggon?' said Mr. Haverstone.

'And where those nasty things came from,' said Mrs. Watkins.

'Stop, stop!' I said. 'One at a time; I must not have such confusion.'

And I dwelt for some moments on the necessity of their not all talking together, that I might gain time to think how I should parry this last attack.

'You want me,' I said, 'to explain to you the natural causes by which these extraordinary appearances were produced.'

'Yes, sir,' said Gray and Wyatt in one breath, 'if you know.'

'Know!' I exclaimed; 'of course I know.' I spoke without hesitation, because I did know what had produced them, namely the Fairy Pill. Then I coughed, dropped my handkerchief and stooped to pick it up, and performed several similar manœuvres, in order to gain time and reflect what I should say.

Happily the *Illustrated News* was lying on the library table and suggested an idea. 'Look here,' I said; 'come to the table all of you. You see this picture—this immense building; you know, I dare say, that it is

the Great Exhibition at Paris, and that it is full of all kinds of wonderful things. Everyone has been or is going to see them. The Emperor of Russia, and the Sultan, and the Prince of Wales, and the Pasha of Egypt, and the Pope, and the Queen of Spain, and Prince Poniatowski, and Prince Gortschakoff, and Princess Carolina Wilhelmina von Wonderburg Gutenhof, and Baron Frankenberg von Ludwigsdorf, and '—but I need not repeat the catalogue of magnificent titles which evidently took away the breath of my audience, and prepared them to listen with docility to my arguments. 'Now what do you suppose,' I asked triumphantly, 'has drawn all these illustrious personages to the Great Exhibition? Is it not the great discoveries of art and science by which men are able now to do a thousand things which could never be done before, and which in former days would have been attributed to witches and spirits. See, this is the plan of the building. Here is the department in which the musical instruments are exhibited. I wonder' (and I turned over the leaf) 'whether there is any account given of the last new invention, the Pansinetroublepolymusicalharmonicon Apollonion. What would you say' (I addressed myself to Gray) 'if the celebrated Baron von Puffendorf of Berlin had invented a most ingenious contrivance, by which any person could be made to appear to sing beautifully and to play upon all kinds of instruments without having learnt the notes?

What would you say if Sir Lloyd had purchased one, or rather had had one sent to him on trial to see if it succeeded? But I do not think,' I said, 'that the invention is yet perfect. You may recollect when the instrument was tried upon you, Wyatt, that I turned you out of the room—you sang C flat instead of C sharp.

'And the tea-kettle and Norbury Brook, sir,' said Gray, in what I confess sounded like a scoffing tone, 'did they sing too, all naturally?'

'Oh, Gray!' I exclaimed, bursting into a laugh, or one which I invented by the aid of covering my mouth with my pocket-handkerchief; 'have you lived so long and not understood what may be done by ventriloquism?'

It was a sudden idea, but for the moment it staggered my opponents. Gray and Wyatt, and indeed the whole party did know quite well what ventriloquism meant, and they had often been extremely astonished by it.

'You can easily understand somewhat of the nature of the instrument,' I said, 'by this little specimen which I have in my pocket,' and I took out my musical snuff-box. 'See, I touch this spring and you will hear at once how the box breaks out into very pretty music. But of course the Pansinetroublepolymusicalharmonicon Apollonion is a more complicated instrument and much more wonderful.'

'Yes, sir,' said Gray, 'for it made me sing without

coming near me or touching me. And the cows, sir, they sang, for I was behind you when you crossed the fields and I heard them.'

'No doubt,' I replied, 'and yet perhaps all this is not so very wonderful—at least not so very unlike something you have known before. I think you must remember being in the drawing-room the other day when Miss Rosa's harp-string sounded of itself.'

'Yes, sir,' answered Gray; 'but my lady said it was because Sir Lloyd happened to cough at the moment, and so there was what my lady called a vibration.'

'Exactly what I mean. Sir Lloyd was standing at a great distance from the harp, and yet by merely coughing he could make it sound. Now just reverse the process and you will understand how, if the instrument were struck in a peculiar way, Sir Lloyd, by the means of these same vibrations, might be made to cough or even to sing. I merely mention this as an illustration, to show you the principle. Carry it out, and it will account even for the singing of the cows.'

'I would rather be shown the instrument, sir,' persisted Gray, 'if you would be good enough to let us see it.'

'And the instrument did not make the cows' tails to grow as the hair grew on my face,' said Wyatt.

'No,' I replied; 'but when you have learnt how the concords and discords of musical notes act upon the sympathetic nerves of the human frame, and by their

oscillations and vibrations stimulate and excite the reticulations of the epidermis, you will be no more surprised at seeing a musical instrument make the hair grow, than you are now at the results of the application of bear's grease or Macassar oil. If I were to show a Cherokee Indian or a Hottentot squaw, one of those live bears which we are told the hair-dresser in Regent Street kills every day, and were to say to the poor ignorant savage that the bear was killed because its fat would give him a pair of whiskers and a moustache, he would think either that I was telling a lie, or that I, or the bear, or the hair-dresser must be a wizard ; but we know that it is quite natural.'

'Yes, sir,' said Wyatt ; 'but the white waistcoat and the gold chain ?'

'Very astonishing!' I said, 'but not necessarily supernatural, as you might know if you were aware of the effect of sympathy and association upon the cerebral organs, and especially on the retina of the eye. You would not then be surprised to find that the Pansinetroublepolymusicalharmonicon Apollonion excited your nervous system to such a degree that you imagined you were dressed as public singers are usually dressed when they take part in a concert. As a proof that it was merely imagination you may remember that when the excitement wore off you ceased to think that you had on either a white waistcoat or a gold chain or white kid gloves. You have not them now.'

'No, sir,' said Wyatt. 'I was sitting in the pantry, quite frightened lest I should burst out singing again, and the clock struck, and I looked down, and the waistcoat and all were gone, and I had on the same clothes that I have now.'

'Of course,' I said, 'that confirms what I told you. Your nervous system was in a state of excitement, and the sudden striking of the clock produced a revulsion, and restored you to your natural condition. Nothing could be more simple or natural. There are cases of a similar kind occurring every day—cases I mean of persons who imagine they are blind or deaf, or have lost the use of their limbs; or who are in a violent fever or dropsy, and are even thought by their friends and the doctors to be dead, and who yet recover at once if they are spoken to in a particular tone of voice, or if the hand is moved up and down over them so as to act upon the nervous system. The marvels of mesmerism are more astonishing, Wyatt, even than your white waistcoat. I could tell you of persons who have actually lost their limbs, or who have been covered with ulcers, and yet have suddenly been restored again.'

'I never heard of anything of that kind, sir,' said the provoking Gray; 'but of course, sir, it is common enough if you say so. Only it is a pity that the doctors in the hospitals don't understand it.'

'Gray,' I said, 'I am afraid you have a sceptical

spirit which disposes you to distrust what you are told, instead of listening to it with a ready ear to imbibe knowledge.'

'I thought, sir,' said Gray, not quite so respectfully as usual, for servants like children are very quick in detecting when their masters are saying or doing something which they ought not; 'I thought, sir, that we were not to listen to what other people told us, but to judge for ourselves, only by what we see ourselves.'

'You are not to listen to other people,' I said, 'or to trust what other people say. But you are to listen to me and to Professor Bewusstseyn, and believe without hesitation what we tell you, because we tell you what is true.'

'And how, sir, am I to know,' said Gray, 'that you are right and everybody else is wrong?'

'How?' I said; 'because we know that we are right: our inner consciousness tells us so, and it cannot deceive us, and therefore you are bound to believe us.'

'But please sir, if I know that I am right, and tell you so, are you not bound to believe me?'

'No, Gray,' I replied; 'that is quite a different thing. But you must not wander off into such wild notions. I hope now you are quite persuaded that what you thought was so supernatural about the music was really quite simple and natural, and that there were no witches or spirits in the case.'

'But, sir,' said Wyatt, 'would you please show us the wonderful instrument. It would be a great comfort to us all. And I am sure none of us would think of going away, if we were sure it was a machine which made us sing and not a witch.'

'Show it you,' I said. 'But how can I show it you if it has been sent back to Paris, because it was not perfect—not a good specimen?'

'I don't think it can have been sent back, sir,' said Gray; 'I know no parcel has been sent away from the house since yesterday morning.'

'Gray,' I said, 'you have no business to interpose your observations. If Sir Lloyd should purchase another of the kind, I will answer for it that you shall all see it, and then I suppose you will be satisfied. I dare say,' I continued, not giving Gray time to answer, 'you would like me to show you also the Grand Imperial—I wonder whether it is advertised in the paper,' and I turned to the *Illustrated News*; 'but no, I don't see it; I imagine we must look for it in the French paper—the Grand Imperial Austro-Russian-Prussian-American-Anglo-Turkish Eirenicon Balsam, invented in honour of the Great International assemblage of peace at Paris, and which by means of the Vaporific Refrigeration Syringe produces moisture, coolness, and evaporation in the hottest day. Then I suppose you would be satisfied that Miss Rosa and

myself were neither dropped in the pond, nor pumped upon by witches, though our clothes were damp.'

'But if you please, sir,' said Mrs. Alsop, modestly and admiringly as usual, 'may I ask you how you got well so suddenly? You were very ill, sir, indeed, all that night, for I sat up till two o'clock in the morning to help the nurse.'

'Ah! Mrs. Alsop,' I said, 'I know how much care you took of me, and I shall not forget it. Look here' (and I showed her a little phial of homœopathic pills which I happened to have in my waistcoat pocket), 'with that everything may be cured, from a broken leg to the scarlet fever, if you will but take a dose small enough.'

'But the roots of trees, sir, and the rock-work in the garden,' said Mr. Haverstone, 'which all those strange men were working at. How did such things come there?'

'You see, Haverstone,' I said, 'pointing to the plan of the exhibition building, 'this great circular gallery appropriated to the machinery department. You cannot have a notion of the wonderful contrivances which it contains for abridging human labour. What if there is in that gallery a newly invented machine—the Patent Steam Eradicator and Picturesque-rock-conglomerator—a machine which you may carry in your waistcoat pocket and which yet will cut down twenty trees in the forest up yonder,

root them up, cut off the trunks and branches, bring any quantity you want of rock-work to any spot you choose, in a minute, and move it all off again just as quickly, only by touching a spring. If Sir Lloyd should buy one of these and supply you with it, would it not be delightful?'

'It certainly would, sir,' said Mr. Haverstone; 'and I should like to see that machine very much.'

'Very well,' I said, with a mysterious and encouraging smile. 'You have seen with your own eyes, have you not, what such a machine could do?'

'Yes, sir,' said Haverstone, 'and I should like to see the machine do it again.'

'Well,' I replied, 'if Sir Lloyd buys one, I hope you will turn it to good account. I shall expect to see wonderful improvements in the grounds.'

'When I have the machine, sir,' said Haverstone; but with a very incredulous smile upon his face.

'You don't doubt the power of machinery, Haverstone, do you?' I said. 'Is there anything which mechanism cannot accomplish. Did you ever see the block machinery in the dockyard at Portsmouth, which takes a piece of lignum vitæ, saws it up, cuts it into blocks; and then bores holes in the blocks, polishes, and puts iron pins into them, exactly as if it were a living creature, a human being. Why should not such a machine be able to do what you saw done at the well?'

'Yes, sir,' said Haverstone, 'but I can see the machine which makes the block. If you will show me the machine which cuts down the trees, sir, and let me see it at work, why then I shall know it is all right; that is, if it can also take it all away again in a minute, as you say.'

I seized upon the fortunate fact, which I happened to recollect, that Haverstone had only seen the Fairy's people at work, and had not been actually present when Rosa retracted her wish and restored the garden to its original form, to quarrel with his interpretation of my words.

'When I said "a minute,"' I replied, 'of course I did not actually mean a minute; it was only a way of expressing a very short time, though there is no reason why the machine should not be brought to such perfection as to work these wonders actually in a minute; but as you were not present when the rocks and trees were taken away, it is simply foolish in you not to accept the fact that if they were brought into the garden by machinery, they could be carried away by the same means. Your sceptical spirit is really too provoking.'

'But the water in the cistern, sir?' here interposed Mrs. Watkins. 'How was it that turned black?'

This interruption I welcomed most gladly, for it enabled me to plant myself upon firm ground, where I had no need of a fib, and no fear of slipping.

'Of course Mrs. Watkins,' I said, 'when the well was made muddy, all the water which flowed from it into the cistern was muddy too—how could it be otherwise? And here,' I cried, turning triumphantly to the rest, 'here is a specimen of the way in which all these other seemingly strange but perfectly natural things have been magnified into mysterious wonders, the work of witches and spirits.'

'But, sir,' said Mrs. Watkins, 'the water turned quite clear again in an instant. I was looking at the cistern and feeling dreadfully vexed about it, for the water was as black as ink, and I could not think what we should do, and in one moment it was all clear and fresh again.'

'And water hasn't any nerves,' said Gray in a sharp impatient tone; 'it can't fancy itself into being in a moment clear when it is muddy—as human beings can fancy themselves into being well and strong, when a moment before they were going to die.'

'Perhaps you remember,' I said, 'the lecture which Dr. Hollis gave at the Town Hall not long ago; and how he poured a few drops of something into a red liquor, and turned it green, and then some other drops, and it became blue. That will at once explain the change which took place in the water.'

'Yes, sir,' answered Mr. Haverstone, 'and if you say there was anything dropped into the well, which turned the water from black to white, and if you

can show me the drops, and do the same thing again, then I shall be very glad to believe it.'

'Yes, sir,' said Mrs. Watkins, 'and so shall I; and I shall not be frightened at all those nastinesses for breakfast.'

As we approached this part of the marvels, I felt greatly relieved, for the Fairy's promise was as yet so far fulfilled, that the wonders of the present day excited by no means the same perturbation as the memory of those of the past. But for Mrs. Watkins's pride in her professional skill, she might have accepted the horrors of the breakfast quietly, and even now her astonishment was excited, not by the fact of their appearance, but by that which was to her a cause of much greater wonder—that we should have been able to partake of them.

'Well, Mrs. Watkins,' I said, 'they were nastinesses, I confess; and it was a mistake to order such a breakfast.'

'Did you order it, sir?' enquired Mrs. Alsop.

'No,' I said, 'it was Miss Emma's doing; it was a mistake of hers.'

'Miss Emma!' they all exclaimed.

'Yes,' I replied; and I turned again to the *Illustrated News*. 'You must read this account,' I said, 'of the cook's shops—the restaurants, or restorations, as they are called in the French Exhibition—where every nation upon earth may restore itself—that it

may find something to eat. You know the archery meeting is to be next week, and you need not therefore be surprised at Lady Lloyd's wishing to give her friends an entertainment of a new kind, and for that purpose desiring to have samples of the food of different countries sent her. It was unfortunate that Miss Emma made such a mistake when her mamma trusted her to write about it; or at least that Lady Lloyd's friend did. The things which were sent, though curious in themselves, were really very bad and uneatable; there was nothing which at all approached to that ice cream you gave us yesterday, Mrs. Watkins, and which really was the best I ever tasted—superior even to what I have had at Woodleigh, and so I shall tell Lady Shropshire.'

Mrs. Watkins curtsied, and seemed capable of persuasion, and I seized upon the symptoms of acquiescence in my assertions to speak strongly of the folly of bringing forward any more difficulties: 'I really cannot waste my time upon them any longer,' I said. 'I am sure you must be convinced now that everything, however strange it may have appeared to you, was produced by natural causes, and therefore I trust I shall hear no more about witches and witchcraft, spirits and haunted houses.'

'Well, sir,' said Mrs. Alsop, 'if you say it was all done by machines and human beings, I'm not afraid. But it is an awful power to be able to do

such things. Only it is a comfort it is not witches and ghosts that have it.'

'I am glad you feel comfortable at such a thought, Mrs. Alsop,' I said, 'though I confess when I think of the Great Exhibition, and of all the machines in it, and especially those for shooting armies up into the air, and spreading peace by putting us all into Prussian uniforms and drilling us with new muskets, I own it does not make me quite easy to think that the persons who can thus make us explode like a volcano are only human beings like ourselves. The worst that your supposed witches have done, is to slap Maria on the back in the dark, flop against the windows, and provide Wyatt with a beard and white waistcoat, and make him sing in a wonderful way; but when emperors and kings want to rectify frontiers, and unite nationalities, I confess their power over these machines frightens me a great deal more than that of witches and spirits.'

How much of all this Mrs. Alsop understood I will not pretend to say, but having, as I hoped, diverted her attention and that of my other auditors into a new channel, I was about to leave the room, rejoicing in the success of my diplomacy, when I heard whispering behind me, and turning round, saw that Gray was once more about to address me with a face of which, as before, I by no means liked the expression.

'If you please, sir,' he said, 'we should like you to tell my lady and Sir Lloyd the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We don't want to go away and leave the best master and mistress in the kingdom, and if you can show us the machines which you have been telling us about, we are quite willing to stay. But if you can't, why then, sir, I am afraid we must go. We are not great scholars as you are, sir, and we have only our eyes and ears to trust to, and if we cannot believe them, we cannot believe anything.'

I confess I was thrown upon my back. 'Gray,' I said, 'you do not really mean to say that you are all going away to-day?'

'Yes, sir,' said Gray. 'We have made up our minds not to sleep another night in the house, unless you can show us the machine you spoke of.'

'But it is impossible to-day,' I said (and I am afraid I coloured up, for I was certainly very much confused). 'I could not get those which have been sent back, though to-morrow I might be able to get some like them, just to let you see how they act. You really must wait till to-morrow.'

'Well, sir,' said Gray doubtfully, 'if that really is so, and if you will give us your word that we shall see them to-morrow we might wait. But it would only be till to-morrow.'

'I will promise you that if you wish to see the

machines to-morrow, you shall see them,' I said, remembering the Lethe wish, and not allowing myself for a moment to doubt that Emma's plans for the enjoyment of her friends would prove as unsuccessful as those which had been tried before, and that in consequence the last pill would fall to my share, and I should be able to efface from the minds of the servants all memory of the startling wonders which had caused so much alarm. 'Now,' I added, 'I hope you are satisfied.'

'Yes, sir; yes, sir,' were the words uttered by all, though not quite cordially;—and with a most unpleasant feeling about the region of the heart, I sent the servants away, and hastened to communicate to Lady Lloyd that I had at least staved off the threatened blow for twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XVII.

EMMA'S SECOND WISH.

I SCARCELY ever remember being more annoyed, more humbled, more ashamed of myself, and altogether more uncomfortable than I was that morning. But I tried to shake off these disagreeable sensations by my usual remedy, a little walk and fresh air, and accordingly pursued my way, as I had at first intended, to Rayadil, to put my letters in the post. I meditated as I went, but not with any pleasant anticipations, on the fact that little Emma had two more happinesses in store for some one. And what misery these might bring upon our heads, what further occasions and necessities for telling fibs I did not know; my only consolation was the reflection that Emma, who was a most affectionate child, would assuredly discharge the whole cornucopia of at least one of her wishes upon her mother, not upon me. 'Poor Mrs. Aberleigh!' I said to myself, not without a little secret satisfaction that I was not in her place. 'She will be the next victim.'

As I turned back after putting my letters in the post, and was passing by the town hall, I heard a great buzzing behind me, and something which sounded like my own name, and turning round I saw a very large bumble-bee in green livery, with pomatumed hair, and gold-headed cane, whom I recognised at once by description as the Fairy's footman. He touched his hat, or rather the place where his hat would have been if he had had one, very respectfully, and in extremely good English, though with rather a fairy accent, he gave 'Miss Emma's compliments, and would I come to her.' She had seen me from the window, in Miss Silkman, the milliner's house, and wished much to speak to me. I begged the footbee to fly back at once with my compliments, and say that I would follow him, which I did with a beating heart, and downcast face. Emma, however, I found radiant with joy, and stationed at a large bow window, which commanded a view of the street and market-place, and the road over the bridge which led into the town. She was evidently in a high state of excitement, expecting every moment an arrival, but of what I knew not.

She told me that she had had a most pleasant picnic at the Waterfall; that all the little elves had been most kind to her, and made excellent playfellows; that Puck had played all sorts of antics, and that Mustard and Peascod, and Flibbertigibbet, and I know not how many others, had brought her wild

strawberries, and caught butterflies for her, and given her honey cups. But Ariel she was most fond of. He was so very gentlemanly. And the Fairy had promised her a new doll. And when she told the Fairy how much she wanted to come to Rayadil, if only for half an hour, to see what she was now going to see (she must not tell me what), the Fairy had sent her down under the care of Bumble, her own footman, only under one special condition, that she should not go up to Brooklyn, nor hold any communication whatever with her mother, but come back at once, after seeing what she so much wished to see. And indeed it was pleasant to witness the child's delight. At one moment she danced about the room; at another she glued her face to the glass to look out upon the winding of the road, and the approach to the bridge; at another she flew up to me, and said—

'Oh, it will be so beautiful. She will so enjoy it! And Hester Stanhope is to see it too! It is to go round in front of her house, and she must see it. Hark!' she cried, 'here they come! Don't you hear?'

And she rushed to the window, threw it open, and I followed her. And certainly I did hear sounds approaching down the hill, through the trees; sounds which were evidently military music. Trumpets,

drums, cymbals, and all the other grand instruments of a regiment of cavalry.

'Emma,' I exclaimed, 'what have you been wishing for? Are you going to have a sham fight?'

'No,' she cried. 'No, no. Here they are!'

And then I caught sight, through the trees, of arms glittering, helmets flashing, gold and scarlet uniforms, prancing horses, and in fact all the pomp and parade of her Majesty's Life Guards.

'Why, Emma,' I said, 'what can you have been wishing?'

But Emma listened not. She seemed comparatively but little interested with the brilliant troop, which now issued out of the trees and prepared to cross the bridge. Something was still to come; and closing the procession, I was amazed to see the great gilt state-carriage, in which the Sovereign used to proceed to open and close Parliament; and the eight cream-coloured horses with ribands and trappings; and the Yeomen of the Guard, and the grooms in scarlet liveries; in fact the whole State procession, at which the population of London gapes open mouthed, now preparing to pass in solemn grandeur through the little whitewashed streets of Rayadil.

'Isn't it beautiful?' exclaimed Emma to me. 'Will she not like it? And Hester Stanhope will never laugh at me again, because mamma has no carriage.'

And I perceived that whatever was the nature of the happiness prepared for Emma's mamma, the sneers of Hester Stanhope upon Emma herself had had some important influence in deciding Emma's choice.

'Hester Stanhope,' I observed to her, 'seems to have had some great influence in forming your wish.'

'Yes,' said Emma, 'she is so proud and conceited; and she is always teasing me, and asking me why mamma does not keep a carriage, and telling me she is to go to court herself, and be presented to the Queen. And she said mamma was old and was not handsome, when I know she is beautiful, for she is the best mamma in the world. And so I was resolved she should see mamma where she ought to be; for I am sure, if anyone in the world deserves to be a queen mamma does. And so I told Hester Stanhope. And now she will see it, and I dare say she will be full of envy. She is always so set up, and so looks down on everybody else.'

'Well, my child,' I said, 'I do not know that your feelings are very different from those of other human beings. But what have you done to your poor mamma for the purpose of filling Hester Stanhope with envy?'

'Oh!' she said, 'you will see,' and she took up an enormous sheet of paper, which when unfolded proved to be one of those exquisite specimens of drawing

and colouring with which the *Pictorial News* sometimes favours the lovers of art; a mass of scarlet and yellow, and purple, and crimson, and green, and blue; of ladies with enormous crinolines, and footmen with enormous legs; and their heads and faces all turned round and gazing for admiration; added to which, in the present instance, was a view of her Majesty's Life Guards upon prancing horses, and her Majesty herself with her diamond crown and velvet robes, proceeding through St. James's Park, to open a session of Parliament.

'Is it not beautiful?' she cried; 'and now you will see it yourself. Here comes the coach! Only look at the coachman with the flowers, and the horses' manes all twisted with ribands, and the footmen swinging on behind! There she is, there she is! I can see her!' she exclaimed.

'Whom, whom?' I asked. 'The Queen? I hope and trust not. You have not surely brought the Queen here in the heat and the dust, and when she is ill and in sorrow, merely to look at her, as English people generally are in the habit of doing.'

'No,' cried Emma, 'not the Queen, but mamma! mamma! Look at her! I can see her. Is not she beautiful? And she has the crown and all!'

'Do you mean Mrs. Aberleigh?' I exclaimed.

'Yes,' said Emma. 'There she is! O how delightful!'

But at this moment a gentle pressure was exerted in some mysterious way, and by invisible hands, and Emma was withdrawn from the window, so that only Mrs. Aberleigh's, or rather the Queen's, crown and velvet robe could be seen by the child, and not her mamma's face, otherwise, I suspect, the whole pageant would have vanished in an instant, and Mrs. Aberleigh would have been restored without a moment's delay to her straw bonnet and plain dress, to simplicity and comfort. Thoroughly to appreciate her look, you must remember that she was one of the most unaffected, unpretending, unartificial, honest-minded persons possible. She did not despise either dress or carriages, diamonds or feathers, if they were in their proper place; but I suspect she thought them a great bore, and would a thousand times rather have been occupied in teaching little Fanny Budd to knit stockings, or in carrying some little comfort to old bed-ridden Jonas Jenkins, than in driving in the most golden of State coaches through the most crowded metropolis, amidst the prancings of Life Guards and the cheering of a mob. The day was also very hot; the prancing horses kicked up clouds of dust, and Emma had forgotten to order one little thing very necessary for the comfort of the procession, namely, the watering of the roads. The crown, moreover, was heavy, the robes sweltering. Mrs. Aberleigh had had for breakfast, through her affectionate daughter's

tender care, two helpings of mock-turtle soup, two of hashed calf's head, a profusion of trifle and tipsy cake, and two dozen macaroons. And after greatly suffering from the effects, she had laid herself down on her sofa with a splitting headache, trying to procure a little sleep, and awoke, as the band of the Life Guards struck up and the procession began to move, to find herself in the great gilt coach, wearing the crimson velvet robes, the crown and the Kohinoor, and evidently about to be paraded before the admiring and wondering eyes of the populace of Rayadil. Mrs. Aberleigh possessed admirable sense, admirable temper; the former of which qualities enabled her in a moment to understand to whom she was indebted for this luxurious position, and the latter to command her feelings. She tried to lean back in the coach, but it was evidently a part of the grand ceremonial that, whether tired or not, sick or not, she should, like the Queen, sit forward, show herself to her people, and occupy herself with bowing to them. And accordingly I saw her—evidently drawn forward by invisible hands—planted full in the glare of the broiling sun, and the people's eyes; while her head was mechanically bowed up and down like the head of a Chinese mandarin on the mantelpiece, till I thought it would have broken off. As the procession reached the market place, and the whole population were gathered at doors and

windows, on steps and curbstones, something happened to the traces of one of the eight cream-coloured horses, and the carriage stopped. And I was really so pained and disconcerted at poor Mrs. Aberleigh's evident annoyance and suffering, that I went down; and though the footmen in scarlet and gold endeavoured to prevent my approach, I made my way to the carriage, listening, as I elbowed my way, to the whispered remarks of the crowd.

'Who is it? Who is it?'

'It's the Queen! The Queen come to see my lady.'

This seemed to create little surprise among the poor old women, in whose eyes Lady Lloyd herself was a queen, and Brooklyn a palace.

'No,' said Mrs. Budd, whom I found standing close by me. 'It's Madam Aberleigh. She's going to court.'

'She's going to be crowned,' said another.

'She deserves it,' said a third.

'Hurrah for Madam Aberleigh! Hurrah!'

And the word of command once given, a *feu de joie* of cheers burst forth along the whole line of the High Street.

The enthusiasm was prodigious, the excitement thrilling. Everyone stood on tip-toe. Everyone shouted, all waved their pocket-handkerchiefs, and

forced themselves forward, and threw up their hats to attest the warmth of their feeling, and then tried to find out from their next neighbour what it was all about. But as nobody knew nobody could tell.

In the uproar of applause I managed to exchange a few words with my poor friend.

'Ah! your Majesty,' I said trying to console her by a laugh. 'Let me congratulate you on your new honours. This is better than the broken shutter and the rickety chair.'

'I prefer the shutter,' she said, 'a thousand times. I could wish myself off it. But here it is no use wishing. Pray, I entreat you, find out Emma, tell her how I am suffering, and let me get rid at once of all this horrible finery.'

'Horrible finery!' I said. 'Why it is the most expensive Genoa velvet! And the embroidery is magnificent!'

'I am sinking under it,' she said. 'If I ever fainted, I should faint now. And there is such a weight upon my head; what have they put on it?'

'Do you not know?' I said; 'it is the crown—superb! the diamonds—wonderful! the emeralds and rubies—unique!'

'I can't see them,' she replied. 'They are of no good to me.'

'No,' I said, 'they are not meant to be any good to you. It is for us, who can see and admire them

while you wear them. Queens are always dressed up for their people's pleasure, not for their own.'

'I must get out,' she said, 'I must escape. I cannot stand this any longer.'

'You cannot, I fear,' was my reply; 'you cannot abdicate, any more than the Queen can. Pray bear it. Look at the Kohinoor on your neck. Surely that will make you comfortable. You cannot be hot, or have a headache, when you have the Kohinoor to wear?'

'You are laughing at me,' she said, in a vexed tone. 'It is not mine.'

'No,' I said, 'nor is it the Queen's. If the Queen were to give it away to-morrow to some lady friend, I suspect the House of Commons would soon break forth into a prodigious clamour. You are not worse off than she is. Pray submit for a short time. It cannot last long.'

'But all the people will see me,' she said.

'Yes,' I said, 'that is the very object. Emma knows all the people will so admire you, and this will delight you. And she also thinks that some of them will admire herself for being your daughter; she particularly wishes Hester Stanhope to see you, in hopes it will make her miserable with envy.'

'Poor child!' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'how like she is to the rest of the world. But how can I pass through the town this way? all the people will know who I am, that I am an impostor.'

'I think,' was my reply, 'the people will be content with knowing that you have the crown on your head, wear the Kohinoor, and have the Life Guards to attend you, and they will not care much about anything else.'

'They may not care,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'but I do. I don't like to have honour paid me, which I don't deserve, simply because I have some borrowed diamonds on my head.'

'My dear Mrs. Aberleigh,' I said, 'do not distress yourself. Yours is only the case of all good and sensible queens and kings too. To be thought very powerful, when you are very weak, and to be asked for help, as if you could relieve every form of suffering, when you cannot cure a cut finger; it is not pleasant, but you must bear it.'

'But here I am obliged,' she said, almost impetuously, 'to sit up, and bow and bow, and play the fool, as if I were really pleased and flattered. How could Emma dream that I could like it?'

'She thought she should like it herself,' I said, 'and so she was sure you would like it. And, after all, she only thought the same as Lady Partington, who is longing to marry Emily Partington to that wretched man, the Duke of Newstead, because he is a Duke, and will give her diamonds; and Mr. Jackson, who wishes to be a Member of Parliament, that he may see his name in the paper as M.P., and hear a mob

shouting and cheering him on the hustings; and all the little people who plague great people with solicitations for this select ball and that exclusive dinner!'

'Yes,' she said; 'but why in the world is Hester Stanhope to see me?'

'To make Hester Stanhope anxious, and humble her,' I said. 'Is Emma the only person in the world who likes to make others envious?'

'No,' sighed Mrs. Aberleigh, 'I am afraid it is human nature! But you are always moralising,' she added, 'always philosophising.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'that was what Rosa said to me when we were up in the clouds together.'

But before I could proceed farther, a most unceremonious remonstrance and effort to dislodge me from my position was made by the footmen and attendants. The cumbrous wheels of the enormous coach showed symptoms of moving; the crowd burst forth into more cheers and more enthusiasm. I found myself forcibly extruded from the procession, and I hurried back to the room where I had left Emma, that I might fill her with remorse, communicate to her her mother's sufferings, and procure her instant release by the unwishing of her wish. But alas! the Fairy knew too well the weakness of a fond child's mind. Emma and the Bumble Bee in livery had disappeared. I searched all the rooms, looked out of the windows, watched the procession, and the gilt coach, as it lumbered

slowly on round the corner of the Market Place; and then thought the best thing I could do was to return to Brooklyn, and communicate what had occurred to the rest of the family; and console them with the hope that Emma might be induced to retract her wish. The remaining pill would then fall to my lot, so that if we could but manage to get through the day, we might once more be able to efface all traces of this most perplexing catastrophe—the effects of which, upon the disturbed minds of the household, would, unless the memory of them could be obliterated, prove absolutely fatal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ARRIVAL.

'It will be obvious,' continued Uncle Peter, 'that our greatest troubles and anxieties hitherto, had been caused by the necessity of keeping our communication with the Fairy, and the extraordinary power which she had given us, a secret from the rest of the world; and this necessity arose entirely from the ignorant prejudices, the weak superstitious fears, under which Englishmen were still labouring at that day. Had the events which I am now relating occurred at present, we should have had no trouble on this score; and instead of fearing to alarm the servants by the idea of their being bewitched, we should not have hesitated to confess our intercourse with spirits of any kind. We might even have invited our friends to a large evening party, to enjoy a pleasant conversation with the ghosts of their departed fathers, wives, husbands, sisters, or children; to feel their knees grasped by invisible hands, and to obtain from the spirits a vast amount of odd information, though conveyed at times

in rather vulgar English, and somewhat questionable orthography. In my early days, many persons would have regarded these practices as a deadly sin. But now Professor Bewusstseyn says they are not sinful. And Mrs. Ibbetson, who is a lady of fashion, and has an inner consciousness of her own, says the same. And the newspapers, which of course represent the 19th century, though they laugh at the practices as a delusion, because there can be nothing supernatural, yet do not seem to think there would be anything wrong in communicating with the spirits if they really did exist. And as it is very unpleasant to be called bigoted and superstitious, it is of course better in these days to give our entire confidence to the Professor; and, since there can be no such things as supernatural beings, to amuse ourselves with ghosts and spirits in a London drawing-room.

'But to return to Brooklyn; my chief anxiety was naturally about the servants. They might not indeed consider the procession the work of witches, but they would unquestionably be startled by it, and it would increase the disturbance of their minds. I half ventured to hope, though it was scarcely probable, that they might not have witnessed the procession. But alas! when I came upon the gravel, in front of the house, the trampling of horses' hoofs, and the marks of wheels, were too evident. I could not doubt that it had started from the house, and I thought that it

would as probably return, to deposit Mrs. Aberleigh at the door. I dreaded the sight of that sceptical, cavilling, Gray, and was stealing quietly up to my room; but he met me in the inner hall with a most threatening scowl upon his face, under which I really cowered with shame. Instead of making room for me to pass, he confronted me at the bottom of the stairs, and was about to say something; but I felt it better to assume indifference, and asked him if Mrs. Aberleigh was in the house.'

'No, sir,' he said indignantly, 'Mrs. Aberleigh is not in the house. She has been carried off by a regiment of cavalry in the Lord Mayor's coach, sir, or the Queen's, I do not know which; or it may be somebody else's. I never saw such an one before. And Mrs. Aberleigh, sir, shrieked out, and called to me to take her out, and cried out for Miss Emma to come and help her; but it was no use. The footmen, sir, or whatever things they were, would not let me come to the door, and the drums and trumpets struck up, so that I could not hear any more. And Mrs. Aberleigh, sir, was dressed up in velvet and diamonds. We are all going away immediately, sir; the people said they should bring Mrs. Aberleigh back here. And then you will be able to see her yourself.'

'Well, Gray,' I said, 'it is all right, all right. But I am in a hurry now, and cannot stop to listen to you.'

'If you please, sir,' said a footman, who now came

up, 'Lady Livingham is in the morning room, and my lady has gone out on horseback with Sir Lloyd.'

'Lady Livingham!' I exclaimed with horror. 'Impossible!'

'Yes, sir,' said the man. 'She arrived a quarter of an hour ago, and her carriage is put up. She is going to stay to-night, sir.'

My heart sank within me. How was it that Lady Lloyd's fib had proved unsuccessful? What was to be done with this intruder into our secrets? How was it possible to conceal the truth? And if we told the truth, what would she think of us? It was useless for me to repeat what had succeeded before in driving away from the house inconvenient spectators and auditors. I could not again make myself deaf or dumb; and I had no time for reflection. The servant opened for me the door of the morning room, and there on the sofa sat Lady Livingham.

'Oh!' she said, 'I hope I have not taken you all by surprise. But I met the Norrises at the station at Worcester, and they told me they could not come to you. And as this was the only reason why Lady Lloyd could not receive me, I thought I might venture. I wanted so much to see Sir Lloyd before I went up to the north. You are sure I shall not be in the way?'

I was on the point of telling her at once that I was sure she would be very much indeed in the way; that

she had better order her carriage and depart at once. But I was unprepared at the moment with any reason. Small-pox in the village, scarlet fever in the house, plague even in myself, as I shook hands with her, would, I knew, only stimulate her to remain, and prescribe for it. O! how I wished that we had told the simple truth at once, had said boldly and plainly that it was inconvenient to receive her, instead of insinuating a fib, which had proved ineffectual.

'But,' continued Lady Livingham, 'do tell me what is going on here? Is the Queen here? Any public ceremonial? Any laying of first stones, or opening of new institutions, which I have not heard of? As we passed through the town we met a troop of Life Guards and the Queen's state carriage, and a lady in it in diamonds. Not the Queen. Who can it be?' I gasped for breath.

'Queen!' I repeated. 'Life Guards! Oh!—a sudden inspiration of another fib flashing across me—Oh, I suppose the poor Queen of Madagascar.'

'The Queen of what?' asked Lady Livingham.

'The Queen of Madagascar,' I said; 'do you not know she is in England with the Queen of the Sandwich Islands?'

'No,' said Lady Livingham.

'Poor thing!' I said, 'poor thing!' and I put my finger significantly to my forehead.

'Is she staying in the neighbourhood?' asked Lady Livingham.

And I nodded also significantly.

'Incognito?' asked Lady Livingham.

'Not exactly,' I said.

'But why are the Life Guards here?' she continued, and why the Queen's carriage?'

'Well,' I said, 'I am not privy to state secrets, but sometimes we make a greater fuss with a savage than we do with a civilised person; not that she is a savage: she is English, and speaks English.'

'Have you seen her? Have you been presented to her?' said Lady Livingham, with eager curiosity.

And I nodded again.

'Hush!' she cried, there are the trumpets! They must be coming this way back!'

'Yes,' I said, 'she often comes here.'

'Comes to this house?' asked Lady Livingham, delighted with the anticipation.

'Yes,' I said, 'poor thing, she is often here. But the head,' I added, 'the head!' and again I touched my forehead.

'Is she out of her mind?' asked Lady Livingham, partly in real sympathy, and partly with the secret hope of prescribing for her.

I shook my head sorrowfully and seriously.

'Poor thing!' sighed Lady Livingham. 'Hereditary,

or brought on by domestic calamities, or by political troubles?—those horrid politics!'

'Fever,' I said, 'brain fever.'

'She must be bled,' said Lady Livingham; 'and cod liver oil will do wonders. But what is her delusion? Every one in her sad case has some special hallucination.'

'Hers,' I said, 'is a most strange one. She fancies she is a relation of Lady Lloyd's—her mother, in fact, Mrs. Aberleigh. You do not know Mrs. Aberleigh, I think.'

'No,' said Lady Livingham, 'you know I have been abroad, and so we have not met.'

'Well,' I said, 'poor Queen Kootootootoo—that is what she is called in her own country—it signifies Pearl of the Ocean;—is really an Englishwoman—Jenny Smith—who married a native prince. She has had an English education, and is, I assure you, an excellent person; but the brain fever has quite upset her.'

'And so she fancies herself to be Mrs. Aberleigh!' said Lady Livingham, enquiringly; 'how very strange! But I have known delusions of the kind. A blister on the nape of the neck, and cod liver oil twice a day, will alleviate the worst symptoms. But what can have produced this?'

'I think,' I said, 'she took a great fancy to Lady Lloyd. She saw her one day accidentally. There was a likeness to a daughter whom she lost. And since

that she has been constantly here. But won't you go to your room?' I added, anxious to remove this most inconvenient guest out of the way before the Queen of Madagascar, alias Mrs. Aberleigh, arrived, and an *éclaircissement* was risked.

But Lady Livingham was a strongminded person, and had set her heart on seeing the Queen, and prescribing for her.

'I do not know what room you can give me,' she said, 'till Lady Lloyd returns. And besides, I so long to see the poor Queen. How do you address her? What is the etiquette? Is she formal, ceremonious?'

'You see,' I said, 'she is evidently fond of state, by her driving about with an escort, and in robes. But I fancy this is usually the case with little kings and queens, as with little people in general.'

Just at this moment a blast of trumpets announced the approach of her Majesty.

Lady Livingham, full of intense curiosity, prepared her most graceful and reverential court curtsey, for she had a great reverence for all in authority, and especially for all royalty, whether great or small. And I hastened out of the room, bent on carrying off Mrs. Aberleigh at once to her apartment without incurring a meeting. I will not dwell on her appearance. Every feature bore on it vexation and pain, and yet not without a sense of the ridiculous. The gorgeous footman would not allow me to ap-

proach to assist her out of the carriage, which indeed was not an easy process, for the train of the velvet robe, which was richly embroidered, and heavy with ermine, satin lining, and gold, required considerable management. But it was at last safely deposited on the steps of the great entrance. And then in a moment, before Gray and the servants appeared, to the infinite relief of Mrs. Aberleigh, drums, trumpets, Life Guards, horses, footmen, gilt coach, and bewigged coachman vanished into empty air. They had done their work, Emma's wish had been punctually executed, and the Fairies were gone; but, to my consternation, the crimson velvet robe, and the diamond crown, and the Kohinoor, still remained. The child, like children in general, thought her mamma could not have too much of a good thing, and had been naturally anxious, not only that Hester Stanhope and the people of Rayadil should admire her in the state coach, but also that all the persons in the house, and especially the servants, should behold her dressed out in her finery. I offered my arm to Mrs. Aberleigh with the view of escorting her to her room, but she could scarcely do more than entreat me to find out her child, and obtain her release from all this odious magnificence.

'Pray take it off,' she said; 'take off this thing upon my head.'

And this, I thought, might easily be arranged in

her own room. I was most anxious to get her out of the hall, out of the reach of a meeting with Lady Livingham. But, to my dismay, I found that the same gentle, invisible, but irresistible pressure which I have before noticed as bringing us to our reluctant breakfast, was applied once more to lead us, not to the harem staircase, but to the morning-room, where Lady Livingham was awaiting us with the greatest interest and curiosity. As Mrs. Aberleigh entered the room with a very disorderly, irregular step, trailing after her the folds of her ermine and velvet, Lady Livingham repeated with all solemnity the reverential court curtsey which she had carefully practised when young, for the first occasion of her presentation at her Majesty's Drawing Room. But Mrs. Aberleigh did not perceive her. She dropped exhausted into a corner of the sofa, exclaiming to me—

'Oh, do find out Emma! Look for Emma! Emma is the only person who has done the mischief, and can wish me out of it.'

'You observe,' I whispered aside to Lady Livingham, 'her mind is running on her friend Emma, Queen Emma, the Queen of the Sandwich Islands.'

Mrs. Aberleigh heard me whisper, and turned round.

'Who is there?' she asked.

'Will your Majesty,' I said, in a tone of voice which I intended should sound playful to Mrs. Aberleigh,

and reverential and serious to Lady Livingham; 'will your Majesty allow me to present to you Lady Livingham?'

'Oh! Lady Livingham!' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'I shall be most happy to make Lady Livingham's acquaintance.'

And Lady Livingham sank reverentially into another profound curtsey, with her arms folded on her breast.

'I am so ashamed,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'that you have surprised me in all this nonsensical finery. But it was my child's doing.'

'Observe,' I whispered, 'how her thoughts run upon her poor lost child.'

Lady Livingham, full of sympathy, lifted her eyes from the ground, on which they had before been reverently fixed.

'Your Majesty,' she said, 'is suffering under the same infliction of ceremony, pomp, and etiquette, under which all wise sovereigns groan, though they acknowledge the necessity of submitting to it.'

'Oh, pray,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'pray don't "your Majesty" me any more. I am sick of the very word.'

'Alas!' sighed Lady Livingham, 'how many of the best sovereigns of the earth have uttered the same sad lamentation.'

Mrs. Aberleigh looked at her with a little surprise.

'I have such a headache,' she said; 'it was so hot

in that horrible coach, and the horses made such a dust. It was worse than the other day,' she said, turning to me, 'when I was carried in a rickety chair on a broken shutter through the streets by a drunken mob, who wanted to make me a Member of Parliament.'

I looked significantly at Lady Livingham, who looked significantly at me, and sighed again deeply, but made no reply.

It was too evident that the poor Queen was rambling in her talk, and out of her mind.

'Won't you come and sit on the sofa?' asked Mrs. Aberleigh.

And Lady Livingham, though a strong-minded woman, shrank back from too close a contact with a patient who might be seized with a sudden paroxysm, and do mischief.

'Will your Majesty allow me to sit in this chair?' said Lady Livingham, cautiously; 'and may I be permitted to assure your Majesty of the profound sympathy, the reverential sorrow, with which I regard your Majesty's state of suffering?'

'Oh, don't talk nonsense,' exclaimed Mrs. Aberleigh, 'don't talk nonsense; it is not suffering, it is only the heat, and headache; if I could but get rid of all this velvet, and this thing upon my head! But I shall go to my room and take it off. Do give me your arm,' she said to me.'

And I was rejoiced at the thought of her escaping.

But on putting my arm out to offer her my assistance, I found it pressed back again, and forcibly held to my side. And as Mrs. Aberleigh made an effort to rise from the sofa, she also was insensibly pushed back by invisible hands, and once more dropped into her seat.

'I cannot get up!' she said.

'And I can't move,' I said.

'Paralysis!' cried Lady Livingham, 'it is paralysis!' and hastening to the bell, she rang it eagerly. 'My medicine chest! my medicine chest!' she exclaimed, as Gray entered; 'ask my servants for it, it is in the carriage.'

And with a most perturbed countenance Gray hurried away, and returned with a large mahogany case.

'No, no,' I said, 'it is not paralysis. Do not be alarmed.'

'It is the Fairies!' said Mrs. Aberleigh; 'it must be the Fairies; I cannot stir.'

'The what, madam?' asked Lady Livingham, respectfully.

'The Fairies, Lady Livingham,' said Mrs. Aberleigh; 'but I am so disturbed by all that has happened, I have forgotten you do not know anything about it.'

'No, madam,' said Lady Livingham, her curiosity raised to a high pitch, to see what new form of hallucination the patient's case might assume.

'Lady Livingham,' said Mrs. Aberleigh seriously and earnestly, 'let me impress upon you one piece of advice: while you are in this house, if they offer you a pill do not take it, it will only bring you into mischief. It was a pill that brought me into this state.'

'May I presume,' said Lady Livingham, 'to ask your Majesty if it was a patent medicine? Such things are often a slow poison. I do not myself approve of pills generally. Drugs in a liquid state are more efficient—a soothing, cooling draught,' she continued, 'if I might presume, I should recommend, in your Majesty's state.'

'Your Majesty!' exclaimed Mrs. Aberleigh, vexed and almost angry. 'Pray, pray, do not laugh at me any more. Do say Mrs. Aberleigh at once, or I shall think you are quizzing.'

'Madam,' said Lady Livingham—'I mean your Majesty—I beg a thousand pardons—I mean Mrs. Aberleigh' ('Yes'—I whispered in an aside; 'humour her, humour her, or she will become violent'), 'might I venture to offer a slight cooling effervescent draught? I have one here, only a seidlitz powder. It quiets and soothes, and would, I am sure, relieve your Majesty's —I beg pardon—Mrs. Aberleigh's headache.'

'I am extremely thirsty,' said Mrs. Aberleigh. 'Only don't give me cod liver oil.'

'No,' said Lady Livingham, 'certainly not, madam, at present. Might I presume to take the liberty of

feeling your Majes—pray, pray, forgive me—Mrs. Aberleigh's pulse?'

'Nonsense!' said Mrs. Aberleigh. 'I am not ill; but I am very thirsty.'

Lady Livingham, however, would not be repelled. She made another profound curtsey, and then, applying her fingers to Mrs. Aberleigh's wrist, counted the pulsations, with all the solemnity of the gravest physician.

'A slight febrile action!' she murmured. 'Nervous excitement! But the draught will calm it!' And she proceeded triumphantly to her medicine chest. Many and many a time had she enjoyed exercising her curative powers upon the unresisting helplessness of school children, and the unsuspecting faith of village patients. But she had never before had the happiness of prescribing for a queen.

'It is not nasty, I hope,' said Mrs. Aberleigh. 'If it is only a seidlitz powder, I don't mind.'

'Oh no! your Majesty!' said Lady Livingham, 'you will find it quite refreshing.' And she presented a glass of effervescent mixture, which really looked tempting, and which her patient drank off, and thanked her.

'And now,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'as I am not to go to my room, could you take off this thing upon my head? It is so heavy, and makes my head ache.'

'Certainly, your Majesty,' said Lady Livingham, 'certainly, Mrs. Aberleigh;' and she proceeded to try and unfasten the pins and ligatures, and combs and general fixtures of Mrs. Aberleigh's head, and to take off the diadem of diamonds. But as fast as she untied one knot, another was made; and one comb was no sooner taken out, than another appeared in its place. The pins which she endeavoured to extract, obstinately ran into her fingers, and pricked her hands, and at last, after long-continued trials, which proved wholly ineffectual, she was obliged, with a most humiliating confession of her own awkwardness, to explain that the crown could not be taken off.

'Dear me!' exclaimed Mrs. Aberleigh. 'It is that provoking Fairy. I suppose I am to wear this all day, and night too! Where can Emma be? What can that child have been wishing? Oh Lady Livingham,' she exclaimed again, earnestly, 'do not forget my warning! Have nothing to do with Fairies; and do not take a pill.'

Lady Livingham once more assured her that she also disapproved of pills, and preferred medicine in a liquid state—and at the same time interchanged with me looks of sympathetic pity for the hallucinations under which the patient was labouring. But by this time Mrs. Aberleigh exhibited signs of sleepiness. Her eyes became heavy—the eyelids drooped—the

limbs became relaxed. She composed herself for a nap in the corner of the sofa, and in a few minutes was evidently in a sound slumber.

'It is the composing draught!' whispered Lady Livingham, triumphantly. 'I made it rather strong on purpose. But look!' she whispered again, and she pointed to Mrs. Aberleigh's matronly but fine figure, which even at her age retained much beauty, and which was exhibited to perfection by the low state dress;—'do look!' and Lady Livingham's eyes were fixed admiringly on the back. 'What a back! What a neck!'

'Yes,' I said, 'it is really finely moulded.'

'Ah,' soliloquized Lady Livingham, 'it is fine—made expressly for it—I must try one.'

'Try what?' I asked.

'A blister,' she whispered. 'It is the only thing to quiet the cerebral action.'

'Pray don't,' I said, 'pray don't.'

But at this moment I thought I heard sounds, as if Sir Lloyd and Lady Lloyd were returning from their ride; and I hastened out of the room to give them due notice of the new difficulty in which we were placed. It proved, however, to be only some horses from the farm. And before I went back into the morning-room, I thought I would go upstairs and see if there was any trace, or any hope of Emma's return, to procure her mother's release. The door

was open—but of Emma there was no sign. I looked on the table, to see if there was any letter or note; but there was nothing except a sheet of paper, on which Emma had been exercising her powers of drawing, at the moment when the Good Fairy carried her off to the picnic. The figures were not remarkably artistic, or correct in their anatomical proportions, but the subject was obvious. It was a pair of human beings undergoing the common operation of being made what novels call happy, and what real experience too often calls miserable, by a matrimonial process. I paid little attention, however, to the choice of the subject, but returned to the morning-room, still hoping to carry off Lady Livingham to her own apartment.

At the door, whom should I find but Lady Lloyd in her riding-habit, her whip in her hand—just returned from her ride. She had already opened the door partly, and I had only time to whisper hurriedly, 'Lady Livingham is there! Hush! hush! She knows nothing. Be prudent—do not betray us. Say nothing about the pill!' And Lady Lloyd, though evidently much perplexed, nodded assent, to show that she comprehended at least something of our difficulties. As we entered the room, we found Mrs. Aberleigh, *alias* the Queen of Magadascar, *alias* the Pearl of the Ocean, still in her diamonds and crimson velvet, and still plunged in a comfortable sleep, on the

sofa. Lady Livingham was locking up her medicine chest. By the disarrangement of the books on the table, on which a space had evidently been cleared for some operation or other, it was evident that she had been occupying herself during my absence, in some pharmaceutical process, which was satisfactorily completed, as she had protected Mrs. Aberleigh's exposed neck from any draught, by gently spreading over it her own black lace mantilla. She held up her finger as we entered, to warn us to silence, pointed to her slumbering patient, shook hands and kissed Lady Lloyd, and then motioned us both to the recess in a window, at the other end of the room; and commenced a conversation in whispers.

'She is better, certainly better,' she said, pointing to Mrs. Aberleigh. 'I have just felt her pulse. It is calmer. Poor thing!'

'Is she ill? is she ill?' exclaimed Lady Lloyd, much alarmed; but she was motioned by Lady Livingham to suppress her voice to a whisper.

'Not worse, I imagine, than usual,' said Lady Livingham, 'but very wild in her talk—very rambling.' And she shook her head, and put her finger to her forehead, to indicate the disturbed and deranged state of Mrs. Aberleigh's brain.

Lady Lloyd looked at her mother with amazement at her attire, but still greater alarm about her health. The former she easily guessed the cause of.

'It is that child,' she whispered to us both, 'that foolish child; she has done the mischief. What has she been wishing?'

But I stopped Lady Lloyd by a look before she said more.

'Yes,' said Lady Livingham, 'I dare say it is the child that has caused it. But if you have any influence, you should not allow her to dress herself up in this manner, and go out driving through the town, with an escort of Life Guards and a state carriage. It must produce excitement, and do harm.'

Lady Lloyd looked at me for an explanation.

'You must let her sleep quietly at present,' continued Lady Livingham. 'She will be better when she wakes up. I have given her a composing draught. She can remain here, I suppose, for the night.'

'Of course,' said Lady Lloyd. 'Of course. Why should she go away?'

'Do you think,' said Lady Livingham, 'that politics have anything to do with it; or is it hereditary? Of course the child is the immediate cause.'

'Of course,' I hastily interposed. 'Of course, it is the child. The child has caused it all.'

'Is she fond of this finery?' asked Lady Livingham.

'Oh no,' said Lady Lloyd, 'she has the simplest taste in the world, and dislikes anything of the kind.'

'Ah! so she said,' observed Lady Livingham. 'But people in that state are often very cunning, and try to

deceive us as to their real feelings. Is she violent at times?'

'Violent!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd, resentfully—'there is not a sweeter temper in the world.'

'She is very fond of you, is she not?' asked Lady Livingham.'

'Very fond indeed!' said Lady Lloyd.

'And are you fond of her?' asked Lady Livingham. 'Is it not rather a bore having her so much in the house? How often is she here?'

'I don't understand,' exclaimed Lady Lloyd, indignantly. 'She always comes to us when she is in England.'

'And she feels herself quite at home here?' asked Lady Livingham.

'Of course she does,' said Lady Lloyd.

'Does Sir Lloyd like it?' continued Lady Livingham. 'I should have thought that it must be a great nuisance to him, to have such a person constantly breaking in on his privacy; and you cannot very well get rid of her.'

'Sir Lloyd is as fond of her as I am,' said Lady Lloyd, in a tone of extreme irritation.

'She must have been handsome,' said Lady Livingham, 'when she was young. With the mother's mouth and nose, I can imagine the daughter rather pretty. But mothers and daughters are not always alike. I am never surprised when I find the mother handsome, and the daughter plain.'

Lady Lloyd coloured, but said nothing.

'I was surprised,' proceeded Lady Livingham, 'to find her manners so good—simple, and much more ladylike than I should have expected.'

'Why surprised?' exclaimed Lady Lloyd. 'Why surprised?'

'Well,' said Lady Livingham, 'persons of low connections do find it difficult to wipe off early associations, though they may marry into families of rank.'

'What can she mean?' muttered Lady Lloyd; 'of course she is joking.'

'How strange it is,' persisted Lady Livingham, 'that she should be so fond of you! You are not at all like her. I should never take you for her daughter.'

'Some people think I am very like her,' said Lady Lloyd, resentfully.

'Are those diamonds her own?' asked Lady Livingham, who, though her heart was in her medicine-chest, had still, like other ladies, reserved a corner in it for her jewel-case. 'Could she give any of them away, I mean, or are they royal heirlooms?'

Lady Lloyd was obliged to take refuge in an inarticulate mumble, which might mean anything or nothing.

'What magnificent velvet!' said Lady Livingham, feeling the embroidered train with a very scientific touch. 'She must be rich; I wonder what her income is?'

Lady Lloyd coloured at the impertinence of the question, but made no reply.

'It is an odd name to give her, Kootootootoo!' said Lady Livingham.

'Who calls her Kootootootoo,' exclaimed Lady Lloyd.

But before she could make any further reply, Mrs. Aberleigh showed signs of uneasiness. She was evidently uncomfortable, disturbed in her slumber. She tried to put her hand to the back of her neck, moved restlessly in her seat, and uttered some inarticulate moaning.

'She is ill,' said Lady Lloyd, very much distressed; 'I am sure she is ill.'

'Oh no!' said Lady Livingham, 'do not be alarmed. She will be all the better for it.'

But at this moment Mrs. Aberleigh opened her eyes.

'Oh!' she said, 'there is something stinging me in the back. It must be a wasp, a musquito, or something worse.'

'Compose yourself, madam,' said Lady Livingham. 'Compose yourself. It is nothing. It will do you good.'

'Oh! do look, do look,' said Mrs. Aberleigh; 'it is biting me again. I am sure it must be something. Look, Mary,' she said to her daughter, whom she then

saw; 'do look and see what horrid thing it is at the back of my neck.'

'I will, mamma,' said Lady Lloyd. But Lady Livingham came up, and endeavoured to divert Lady Lloyd's attention from any such purpose.

'I like,' she said, 'to hear you call her mamma. It soothes her, humours her, and you should always appear to fall in with the delusions of poor creatures in her state.'

'Why, what should I call her?' asked Lady Lloyd, in amazement.

'Well,' said Lady Livingham, 'of course I should call her Kootootootoo, as everybody else calls her.'

'Everybody!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd; 'who dares to call my mother names?'

'Well, my dear Lady Lloyd,' said Lady Livingham, 'you need not be offended. Kootootootoo means—Pearl of the Ocean, does it not?' and she turned to me for a confirmation of the assertion, which I was obliged to give by a bow. 'And even if it meant something worse you need not be angry,' she continued; 'one would imagine she was really your mother.'

'Really my mother!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd. 'Why, she is my mother!'

'Yes, my dear,' said Lady Livingham. 'I know you call her so, and it is very kind of you to do so,

and it does her good. But all the world in Madagascar knows who she really is—Jenny Smith; and that she—'

Before Lady Livingham could finish her sentence, Mrs. Aberleigh once more became disturbed.

'Oh, pray, pray come and look at my back. What is it? What can it be? It is like twenty wasps.'

And Lady Lloyd, notwithstanding Lady Livingham's efforts to prevent her, hurried to the sofa, withdrew the lace mantilla, and exclaimed with horror—

'Why, my dear mamma, they have been putting you on a blister!'

'A blister!' cried Mrs. Aberleigh, 'a blister! What for? I am quite well. Who has dared to put me on a blister without telling me, or asking my consent?'

'Your Majesty, I am sure, will forgive me,' said Lady Livingham, curtseying once more to the ground. 'I implore your forgiveness. But, sympathising as I do with your Majesty's sufferings, I could not help presuming to apply a remedy, which I knew would relieve them.'

'Take it off,' exclaimed Mrs. Aberleigh, 'take it off this instant.'

'May I implore your Majesty,' said Lady Livingham, 'to allow it to remain only a quarter of an hour?'

'Mary, my dear,' said Mrs. Aberleigh to her daugh-

ter, 'Lady Livingham is out of her mind. She has been calling me, "her Majesty," all this morning, as if she did not know who I was. And she has put this blister on my back in my sleep. And it is not safe to be in the same room with her. Send for Dr. Bolus at once.'

And then Lady Lloyd recalled the many strange expressions and unintelligible remarks which Lady Livingham had made to her.

'Yes,' she whispered to her mother. 'She said you were Jenny Smith, but that you were called Kootootootoo. I do fear she is out of her mind.'

'Send for Dr. Bolus at once,' said Mrs. Aberleigh, 'and take her quietly to her room. And do not let her have that box,' and she pointed to the medicine-chest. 'She may do herself mischief. People in that state are always fond of mischief. Think of her putting a blister on my back. It always shows itself in that way—some sly, artful contrivance for annoying somebody. If Doctor Bolus cannot come at once, I should give her a calomel pill and some castor oil. But do see there are no knives or scissors in her room.'

Lady Livingham witnessed the whispering with some degree of affected surprise, and was still more surprised to find Lady Lloyd hurry out of the room and return with Mrs. Alsop, her own maid, Lady Livingham's maid, and Mr. Gray, in case more strength

should be required. They all gathered round Lady Livingham, pressed her earnestly not to be alarmed, not to be agitated, but to come quietly and lie down, when she would be better.

It is no uncommon thing for persons who differ in their views to charge each other mutually with insanity in some shape or other. And the controversy is usually decided by a plurality of hands and voices. And as Lady Lloyd and Mrs. Aberleigh had the whole household at their command, there is little doubt what the result would have been, and which of the two parties would have been triumphant in their sanity, and which placed under restraint, had I not thought it best to interpose, and, at the sacrifice of my own character for veracity, to explain the mystery and tell the whole truth. I begged Lady Lloyd to send the bewildered servants out of the room, made Lady Livingham sit down with us, and then revealed to her the whole history, not omitting even our dread of the cod liver oil, and our endeavours to avert her arrival. I will not attempt to describe her astonishment, or the disappointment she expressed at finding there was no longer any chance of her enjoying a pill herself.

'Oh!' she sighed, 'what an opportunity it would have been! What interesting experiments one might have made! Why, I might have had a whole hospital to operate upon. And now! Oh, would you'—she

turned to me—'would you give me up your pill if it should come to you? You should be my very first object. I am sure you are out of order. The liver! the liver!' she repeated significantly. 'I can see it by the whites of the eyes. I should set you right in a day!'

But I was obdurate and obstinate. Even had it been compatible with the Fairy's order, such a prospect would not have tempted me to surrender that last and precious hope to any other hands than my own, satisfied as I was that it would be imperatively required in order to pass a sponge effectually over the whole of our proceedings.

'But how could you all,' exclaimed Lady Livingham, 'make such mistakes as you have? Think of wasting and throwing away such an enormous power of beneficence! And shall I tell you,' she continued, 'the cause of your failures? You made no inquiries beforehand, what persons wished and wanted, or what were their characters. You have acted with the same foolish thoughtlessness, as if I stood at Charing Cross and gave money to everyone who passed, without inquiring who he was, or what was his character, or how he would spend it. Of course only mischief could come from this. There can be no true benevolence,' she said, 'without discretion and judgment. Oh, if I had had a pill, what could I not have done!'

It was, however, useless to lament. Lady Lloyd in her kindness of heart did indeed hint at the possibility of petitioning the Fairy for another supply. But Sir Lloyd was so firm in prohibiting it, and I myself thought it so hopeless, that she abandoned the idea. The afternoon passed off quietly; the servants, though uneasy, were still under the influence of the Fairy, as regarded the day's wonders, and accepted them more quietly than I could possibly have anticipated. Mrs. Aberleigh having been inspected in her magnificent dress by the whole party, and having kindly allowed all the servants to come and see her, as they like to see their mistresses attired for a ball, was permitted by the Fairies to retire to her room, and woke up, after a little nap, in her usual plain dress, and without the Kohinoor; which I am glad to know was safely restored to the Queen's jewel-case, because her Majesty wore it a few days afterwards, when she prorogued Parliament in person.

CHAPTER XIX.

EMMA'S LAST WISH.

At dinner we were all tolerably cheerful; though we knew that one more of Emma's wishes still remained unfulfilled. But as the day had advanced so far, we trusted that the storm of her benevolence had burst at a distance from us, and was afflicting some dear young friend unknown to ourselves.

Lady Livingham was full of anecdote, Mr. Heathorn rich in scientific information, Sir Lloyd amiable and agreeable as ever; and Mrs. Beaumont and the Doctor, who had a great liking for each other, especially interested us all by their theories as to the difference between the Socrates of Xenophon and of Plato. The Doctor was very fond of reading to Mrs. Beaumont, in the morning, some of his own lucubrations; and Mrs. Beaumont could always appeal to the Doctor for the elucidation of any difficulty which she might encounter in her own classical studies: added to which, they had a real value and regard for the sterling excellencies in each other's characters. So

that they always managed to sit next each other at dinner and breakfast, strolled together on the terrace, and in fact paired off as persons do pair off in country houses; and we often used to have a little laugh with them—not at them—on the subject of their flirtations, and this, in the presence of Emma.

We sat rather longer than usual after dinner; and it struck eight as the gentlemen left the dining-room to go to the drawing-room. But I was surprised, as I passed through the inner hall, to find myself insensibly diverging to the great library, instead of the drawing-room door. I experienced again the irresistible pressure, and made no attempt at useless opposition.

As the library door was opened before me, I found myself in front of a large glass, and my eye was caught by a white flower in my button-hole. I looked down —I wore a very elegant silver favour—orange flower, vine leaf, grapes, satin ribband, silver fringe and tassels—in fact, a very elegant decoration for a marriage feast. I started, for I was not in the habit of wearing flowers in my button-hole, and still less in the habit of decorating myself with bridal favours. On looking round the room I observed that the great library table had been removed, and chairs had been arranged on both sides, leaving a space free in the centre; whilst at the upper end of the room was a table covered with a green cloth, and upon it a book—

apparently a kind of register—and also a silver ink-stand. What could be the meaning?

'What is this? Who has been doing this?' exclaimed a voice behind me.

It was Sir Lloyd himself, also decorated with a silver favour.

'Why, who is going to be married?' exclaimed another voice.

Mr. Heathorn also with his silver favour!

'It cannot be me,' said Sir Lloyd.

'Nor me,' said Mr. Heathorn.

And then the dreadful thought flashed across me—'Can I be the victim? But whom am I to be married to? Emma cannot want to marry me herself.'

I was not, however, left long in my anxiety; for there now appeared at the door the poor old Doctor, still ancient, still infirm, still with whitened hair and wrinkled visage; but with a gold-headed cane instead of his umbrella, his thin legs encased in pearl-coloured silk stockings, gold buckles in his polished shoes, a new dress-coat of fashionable cut, a silver favour double the size of ours in his button-hole, and a large and magnificent bouquet in his hand. He hobbled into the room, caught sight of himself in the glass, gazed round upon us in amazement, and exclaimed, 'What can be the meaning of all this?'

'Why, Doctor,' I said, 'surely you are going to be married! Where did you get that magnificent bouquet?'

'I am sure I don't know,' he said. 'Where did you all get those silver favours?'

'I am sure I don't know,' I replied, 'I suppose they must be a present from you.'

'What!' exclaimed the Doctor. 'Do you think I am going to be married? Why, I would as soon be hung!'

'Well,' I said, 'I think your position is an alarming one. I would not give much for your chance of prolonging your celibacy, if the Fairy has anything to do with this.'

'That abominable Fairy,' exclaimed the Doctor.

'Hush!' I said, 'hush! or she may hear you, and give you twenty wives instead of one.'

'I won't,' he said; 'I won't be married. Nobody has a right to marry me against my will. Whom am I to be married to? I protest against it.'

But at this moment a rustling of silks and satins was heard at the door, like an ocean of gauze and lace swelling into billows under a tempest of fans.

The ladies appeared all in rich attire, all with bridal favours, and all in amazement. But the amazement was a pleasant one. They saw themselves in the glass, and highly approved the taste which the fairies (for no one else could have done it) had exhibited in their toilette. A marriage was evidently on the tapis, but between whom? Who was to be the bridegroom, and who the bride? They had no time to wonder or

inquire; for once more there came surging through the hall the rustling and ruffling of silks, and on turning round they beheld a lovely procession of bridesmaids—veiled, and wreathed, and flounced, and furbelowed, and bouquetted, and smiling—following, two and two, a lady also veiled and clouded herself with lace, and twined with orange blossoms, but who was apparently at that moment perfectly unconscious of any change which had taken place in her usual simple attire, or any likely to take place in her condition; for with her gold-rimmed glasses in her hand she was busily searching out a passage in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' which she wished to show the Doctor, with whom she had been discussing the economical theories of France. 'Where is the Doctor?' she asked, looking up from the book; 'I want to show him what Turgot's real vice was.'

'I'm here—I'm here,' faintly answered the Doctor, frightened out of his wits, and trying to hide himself behind a book-case.

'Oh!' shrieked Mrs. Beaumont—for it was no one else. 'What is the meaning of this? Who has been dressing me up in this nonsense? Orange blossoms!' she exclaimed, as she saw her elegant bridal dress reflected in the glass. 'Brussels lace! Why, some of you are going to be married! Poor things!' she added, with a pitying voice, casting an eye on the bevy of bridesmaids, who were smiling and tittering as they

stood apart from her at a little distance. And she murmured to herself with a look of compassion on them.

> 'The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
> Had he thy reason would he skip and play?'

'Poor things! This must be that child Emma's doing. She has been wishing to make some of her young friends happy by marrying them!'

But her further soliloquy was interrupted by the compulsory reluctant advance of the Doctor, who, though throwing up his hands, and protesting, and struggling against the invisible influence which propelled him forward, was now forced to come forth from his retreat behind the bookcase. Planting reluctantly one foot before the other in a very awkward and ungraceful manner, he was moved on to the front of Mrs. Beaumont, when it seemed as if some one seized him by the shoulder, pressed him down to drop on one knee, and then shot out his right hand with the bouquet immediately under Mrs. Beaumont's nose.

'Get up, Doctor, get up,' said Mrs. Beaumont. 'Do not be nonsensical. I don't want flowers. Everybody is laughing at you.'

'Oh, my dear Mrs. Beaumont,' groaned the Doctor. 'No, no,' he corrected himself, 'not dear, I did not mean that. I don't mean anything. Indeed I don't. I would much rather not. I have the greatest respect and a great liking. And pray, pray don't be offended,

but I can't. It is quite impossible. I never thought of such a thing.'

'Thought of what?' asked Mrs. Beaumont with much amazement.

'Oh, I don't know,' muttered the Doctor. 'I don't know what will become of me. But I won't,' he exclaimed, as if he had summoned up all his courage for a decisive resolution. 'I won't; nothing shall induce me. All the fairies in the world shall not force me.'

'Force you to do what?' asked Mrs. Beaumont.

'Oh, I don't know,' groaned the Doctor. 'I don't know.'

'Do get up,' said Mrs. Beaumont, 'get up. You are out of your senses.'

'I can't get up,' said the Doctor, 'they won't let me.' And once more his right hand with the bouquet was forcibly protruded to Mrs. Beaumont's nose; while his left hand was seized by some invisible agency, and slapped violently against his right breast, as if there was the position of his heart; the fairies apparently having no hearts of their own, and therefore being quite indifferent to its position in the breast of man.

At the same time Mrs. Beaumont felt her own hand compelled to take the Doctor's bouquet and rest it against her heart.

At this alarming symptom he could not refrain from exclaiming:

'Remember, Mrs. Beaumont, it does not mean anything. Indeed it does not. I don't want you to have it; I would much rather you wouldn't. It is the abominable fairies. I don't want to hurt your feelings. I would not for the world. And I look on you as a friend, and always have done so;—as a friend, remember, nothing more. Indeed, indeed it is nothing more.'

'Nothing more!' exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont laughing, 'I hope not indeed. Why, you never dreamed of making love to me;—did you?' And the idea was so ludicrous, that she could not control her laughter.

'Oh! never, never,' said the Doctor, 'not for the world!'

But Mrs. Beaumont's laughter was checked, and she became seriously angry, as the Doctor's hand was forced into his waistcoat pocket, and he was compelled—though with protest upon protest, that it was not his doing, that it meant nothing—to produce and unclasp a little morocco case, and from it to extract a gold ring, towards which Mrs. Beaumont, with a scream of indignation, was forced to present a finger of her hand.

'Go away,' she said, 'go away, you foolish silly old man. How can you be so ridiculous, and make such an exposure of yourself?'

'I can't go away,' groaned the Doctor. 'I would if I could. I wish I were a thousand miles off! But they won't let me.'

'This is really too much,' said Mrs. Beaumont. 'I hope,' and she turned to us, 'you have not got up this exhibition as a sort of charade to make this poor old man ridiculous; and myself too,' she added, with her usual quiet dignity.

We all protested that we had nothing to do with it, were as ignorant as herself of the proceeding, and could only account for it by the usual explanation of all our disasters during the week, namely, the Fairy and the pill.

'It is Emma's doings,' I said. 'She knew the regard you had for each other, and thought, as so many older people think, that nothing could perfect your happiness so much as matrimony.'

'Matrimony!' shrieked Mrs. Beaumont.

'Matrimony!' groaned the Doctor.

'Not for ten thousand worlds,' exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont.

'Not for ten million,' echoed the Doctor, turning at the same time to beg pardon most humbly, and assure Mrs. Beaumont that he would on no acconnt be disrespectful, that he did not mean anything, and had no intentions.

'I should hope not,' exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont. 'What could you intend?'

But any further parley was suddenly cut off. The Doctor felt himself compelled, however reluctantly, to stretch forth his right hand, and Mrs. Beaumont her left,

to bring at least the tips of their fingers into contact and so to advance in procession to the table covered with green cloth; while the bevy of bridesmaids, who I suspect were all fairies in disguise, followed with titterings and whisperings, and becks and smiles, which seemed full of amusement to themselves, if not complimentary to us.

It appeared that the fairies, having no power to procure a bishop or clergyman to perform the ceremony, had done the next best thing within their reach, and what, in the nineteenth century in England, is equally efficacious, and in the eye of Parliament even more satisfactory, as being more worthy of an enlightened age which understands the real nature of marriage, and contemplates it without superstition as a purely civil and secular convention. They had pressed into their service to perform the ceremony, a commissioner of taxes, a deputy secretary of the savings bank, the head clerk of the magistrates, and Mr. Sharp, the superintendent of police. So that in point of numbers there was no deficiency. And as Mr. Sharp was a most respectable Wesleyan, the head clerk an Unitarian, the secretary a Mormonite, and the commissioner nothing at all, every taint of superstition was done away with, and the State might be considered as fairly represented in the abstract purity and simplicity of its philosophical indifferentism.

In what the ceremony consisted I really do not know, for several reasons. First, I never before or since was present at a Parliamentary marriage. Secondly, a cloud of muslin and lace enveloped the principal parties, round whom the bridesmaids gathered close. Thirdly (and with this reason you will probably be content), I had closed my eyes.

And if you ask—said Uncle Peter—why I had done this, I will give you three more reasons. First, I caught sight of the faces of the two persons who were in this way to be made happy against their will, and I said to myself, 'If we could see into hearts, at how many marriage ceremonies, veiled like this in silks and lace, muslin and orange blossom, should we see what I saw upon those faces?' And I closed my eyes, that I might see it no more. But secondly, I closed them because I was superstitious and narrow-minded, and I had never been able, even with the aid of Acts of Parliament, to rid my mind of certain old-fashioned notions respecting the nature of marriage, its significance, its solemnity, its blessing. And any profanation of it, any foolish meddling with it, gave me a shock. And thirdly, there rose up before me, I cannot tell how, a whole series of fearful pictures, which represented the history of a state and a society which has learnt to regard marriage only as a civil and parliamentary institution. And so I sat, with my hand before my face, and only heard a long speech, which the chief

authority in the process, namely, the commissioner of taxes, addressed to the married pair. For in this truth at least he was instructed, that to English taste and English feeling there is no other way of giving solemnity to a ceremony but a long harangue.

After congratulating them on their happiness, he expatiated at considerable length on the blessings of living in a state which had shaken off the shackles of superstition, and replaced matrimonial arrangements in their true and simple light. He showed by an historical retrospect the way in which this light had dawned gradually upon the English mind. He traced it first to the enlightenment of popes, who wisely claimed the power of dispensing with all laws, whatever was their origin; then to King Henry VIII., who, having repudiated the pope, on account of his usurpations and dispensations, succeeded naturally to the same rights; and then to the Parliament of England, who of course being omnipotent, could, like the pope, dispense with anything; and who, having begun gradually with divorcing one or two wealthy and noble persons, thought it a cruel thing that the poor should not be able to commit sin with equal facility as the rich. He looked forward, he said, to the time when all narrow-minded restrictions would be removed from the rite of marriage; when every man might marry any and every one he chose, without limitation of niece or aunt, sister-in-law or sister. And though, he said, it

could not be expected that we should reach at once the blessing of unlimited polygamy, still, by facilitating separation and divorce, rapidity of change and succession might be made to supply the place of simultaneous plurality, and might equally relieve the weariness and monotony which now too often hang like a cloud over the heaven of matrimonial felicity. He pointed out to them the facilities which a benignant State now offered, at a reduced rate of expense, for exchanging husbands and wives; that they had only to break a law of the Decalogue, or torment each other out of their lives, and Parliament, finding they were unhappy together, would be quite willing to separate them, and give them an opportunity of trying another chance. He then shook hands with the married pair, assured them that the blessing of the House of Commons would be always with them to ensure their happiness, and, having discharged his duty, the commissioner with his assistants vanished, and the bridal train was formed again; and though we, who had been involuntary spectators of the scene, and forced to our places without the power of interfering, now tried to burst through the restraints which pinned us down, we were powerless, till the procession had passed out of the room and the doors closed upon it.

We looked at each other in dismay.

'Where are they gone?' asked Lady Lloyd.

'Where can they be gone to? What a frightful conclusion to our plans!'

'Horrible!' we all exclaimed.

'I imagine,' I said, 'they are gone to put on their travelling dresses; for here I see the carriage coming to the door.'

And in due form, with four white horses, postillions with white favours, imperials properly packed, and the gentleman's gentleman, and the lady's maid duly ensconced in the rumble, appeared the carriage, which was to transport the happy pair to some blissful oasis of solitude and love, in the shape of a fashionable hotel.

Happily, and to my great delight, it was not the carriage only which appeared. Amid a throng of domestics and villagers, who were gazing at it, I caught sight of Emma. She had stationed herself behind the vehicle, and she held something in her hand, which, as it was getting dark, I could not exactly distinguish. I made a great effort, and succeeded in rushing out of the room.

'Oh, Emma! Emma!' I said, 'you foolish, foolish child! What have you been doing?'

'Oh!' she said, 'won't they be happy! Are they coming out? See, I have got the old shoe to fling after the carriage. I had set my heart upon this. I shall so like to see them and wish them joy.'

'Don't speak of joy, my child,' I said. 'You have made two excellent people utterly miserable.'

'But they always liked each other so much,' she exclaimed.

'Yes, my dear, but liking and marrying are different things.'

'But,' she said, 'I thought persons who liked each other always wished to be married. Are not people always happy when they are married? And they would so suit each other. Doctor Dean could always read to Mrs. Beaumont, and Mrs. Beaumont could nurse the Doctor. And they could be so comfortable together. I was sure it would make them so happy.'

'Well, my dear,' I said, 'you are not the only person who has tried to make people happy by inveigling them into wedlock, and who has in so doing made a terrible mistake. Never again meddle with such matters, I warn you.—But here they are coming.'

I knew it was unnecessary to say more. One sight of the happy pair, one exclamation of them both, 'Oh Emma, Emma! what have you done!' so frightened and so distressed her, that in a moment there sprung from both her heart and her lips the cry,

'Oh how sorry I am! How I wish I had not done it!'

And the carriage, and the post-horses, and the

imperials, and the servants vanished into air. The Doctor, begging ten thousand pardons, tore away his own hand from Mrs. Beaumont's, to which it had before been involuntarily attached. Mrs. Beaumont started back, and nearly dropped to the ground. Our own bridal favours vanished. I led poor Mrs. Beaumont back to the drawing-room; and, as we passed by the open door of the library, I observed that the table, which had been covered with green cloth, was restored to its normal state, and strewn with the usual literary litter of maps and papers, journals and reviews. The Doctor took advantage of his liberty to hasten to his own room, and bolt and double-lock himself in.

And now, thoroughly frightened by the consequences and possible consequences of our dealings with the Fairy, we gathered round Mrs. Beaumont's chair to assure her, that if there was any validity in the marriage, there was equal validity in Emma's wish to repeal it, and that there would be no necessity for applying to the Divorce Court to release her from her matrimonial fetters.

'Silly, silly Emma,' we all said.

'But is Emma,' I asked, 'the only matchmaker in the world? Has she done anything but what all the mothers in a London season are doing, or trying to do every day?' And I might have proceeded to moralise, but I was interrupted by the appearance of

Emma herself, who, crying and sobbing, came to ask Mrs. Beaumont's forgiveness.

'Oh!' she said, 'I thought you would have been so happy. But you had a beautiful drive, hadn't you, mamma?' And her eyes brightened up at the idea of the happiness she had secured to her mother. 'And you all enjoyed your breakfast, I am sure,' she added. 'I took such pains to think over what you would each like, and wrote it all down.'

'My dear,' I said, 'we are very grateful for your kind intentions.' And we spared her any further revelation of the real operation and effects of her kind wishes. But she was evidently disappointed at not receiving more ardent expressions of our gratitude.

One person alone sat musing with evident vexation while I consoled, or tried to console, everybody with the assurance that one more pill remained to us still, and that pill was in my hands;—and my first object would be as usual to obliterate every trace of this day's proceedings.

'Yes,' sighed Lady Livingham, 'it is this which is so provoking. To see people of your age, educated people, invested with such a wonderful power of diffusing happiness, and then to find that you have wasted it as you have. Oh! if I had but a pill, how soon I should show you how to employ it,' she sighed again. 'To have lost such an opportunity is a subject for despair.'

Just at this moment Mr. Gray appeared with a very

small packet and a little twisted note, found on the hall table: by whom it had been left he did not know. It was addressed to Lady Livingham. The note was from the Fairy. It was very courteous, contained two or three polite fibs under the form of apologies for not calling on Lady Livingham; lamented the unhappy results of the Fairy's own efforts to bless mankind through the agency of the party at Brooklyn, who had so entirely mistaken her wishes; and with an expression of entire confidence in Lady Livingham's judgment and discretion, begged her acceptance of the accompanying little packet, the contents of which were to be made use of the next day.

'Oh!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd, 'I do hope it is another phial of pills.'

'I hope, I trust not,' groaned the gentlemen of the party.

But the ladies could not help reverting to their former dreams, with the conviction that they should make no more mistakes. They gathered round Lady Livingham as she opened the little packet, and discovered a tiny green velvet case with the Fairy's cipher in gold worked upon it, and in the inside, on a bed of white satin, one little pill.

'Only one,' sighed Lady Livingham, whose hopes having been once raised had taken a sudden flight from one pill to a whole phial-full, and consequently from gratitude to discontent.

'Only one!' sighed the other ladies.

'Only one!' I said, with great relief of mind.

And the pill was examined, and examined, and pronounced to be the same as the others; and consequently was to be taken with the same accompaniments and conditions.

Lady Livingham replaced it in the case, carefully deposited the case in her reticule, and took an early leave of us. As she shook hands and wished me good night, I entreated her not to forget, as her first wish, that all which had occurred during this unhappy day might be obliterated from memory.

'And you,' she said in return, 'must come and help me to-morrow. I shall want some assistance. I am always an early riser: by half-past six I shall hope to see you in my dressing-room punctually. Lady Lloyd will let us have a cup of coffee. There is no time so good for business. I always write my letters before breakfast.'

'Spare me,' I said; 'excuse me,' for I had indeed a horror of being mixed up with any more of these proceedings.

'Indeed,' she said, 'I cannot. You are,' she whispered (and I could not resist the flattery), 'the Nestor of the party. You must come.'

And I bowed and resigned myself to my fate.

CHAPTER XX.

LADY LIVINGHAM'S PILL.

At half-past six the next morning, I presented myself in Lady Livingham's dressing-room. I found her established at her writing-table—paper, pens and ink, envelopes, stamps, everything arranged for an extensive correspondence, and my own duties as secretary indicated by a writing-desk arranged before my own chair. She gave me a cup of coffee; and while I was drinking it, explained that she had taken the pill, had found it rather pleasant than not (I think she had an acquired taste for ipecacuanha), and had not forgotten the Lethe wish; although she owned—with that strictness and severity of moral discrimination which made her so anxious to bestow her favours only on meritorious objects—that she could scarcely reconcile it to her conscience, to waste one of her four wishes on the rectification of blunders which ought never to have been committed, and on saving from the just punishment of their folly, persons who richly deserved the troubles into which they had plunged themselves.

'With only this one pill,' she said, 'I must be limited in my operations. But my first wish has been, of course, to let it be generally known that I have it in my power to supply the wants of deserving persons, and that I am willing to receive their applications. You can easily imagine that, as poverty is the chief source of suffering, I have ordered a sufficient credit with the Bank of England to meet any demands which may be made on our relief fund. And as I think the next great cause of human misery is the struggle of merit under difficulties, to obtain patronage and promotion, I have secured for the day the nomination to all the offices, clerkships, and posts generally which we may require. I had,' she continued, 'a fourth wish, but that unfortunate necessity of providing for the obliteration of previous blunders has robbed me of it. How many of the most cruel sufferings of life,' she sighed, 'are caused by the bereavement of friends in death! What a happiness it would have been to have had the power of restoring the lost to life, giving back the beloved husband to his disconsolate widow, placing the child again in its mother's arms, and raising again from the field of slaughter the heroes whom the ambition of their monarchs has sacrificed in battle. I fear,' she added, 'that, without this last power, the other two will be imperfect. But it was necessary to secure them, since calling people to life again without giving them the means of sup-

porting life in comfort, would conduce but little to their happiness.'

I bowed assent, though I confess I was alarmed at this new instance of the vast range which human benevolence is inclined to embrace. I comforted myself, however, with the conviction, that with my own pill still safe in my dressing-case, I should be able the next morning to do what would be absolutely necessary, and put the world again to rights.

'You have,' I said, 'let it be known generally, that you are willing to receive applications from deserving objects who want relief and assistance?'

'Yes,' was the reply, 'only from deserving objects. I will not help any others. Ah!' and Lady Livingham cast her eyes on a letter which dropped suddenly on the table—'here is the first application!'

She gravely opened the envelope.

As we have all received and many of us written begging letters, from the boy at school who wants pocket money, to the widow with six fatherless children who wants bread to give them, it is unnecessary for me to copy the epistle in full. It was, as it was stated, a heart-rending case. Four respectable references were offered, and Lady Livingham begged me to write at once to those references, and inquire if the representation was correct.

But before I had written the date of my own letter three more dropped from the ceiling.

'I will open them,' said Lady Livingham, 'while you are writing.'

But she had not reached the first three lines of another distressing case, into which she resolved to inquire, than the ceiling seemed to open, and down from it, down the chimney, through the window, through the keyhole, there showered and shot such a snowstorm of letters in all shapes and sizes, from all parts of the earth, with postage stamps sufficient to satisfy the craving of the most rapacious collector of those beautiful and valuable works of art, that I was obliged to drop my pen.

At this moment there was a rap at the door.

'If you please, my lady, the postman is come. There are three waggon-loads of letters, which they have brought up, and the rest will be sent up when the waggons return. And, please my lady, where are they to be put?'

'O dear!' exclaimed Lady Livingham, 'I am sure I don't know. Is there not a barn or a coach-house?'

'Is there not a fire?' I ventured to ask, 'or at any rate a candle somewhere, or a lucifer match?'

'Oh!' she said, 'but we must examine—must inquire into these cases. I must read these letters.'

'And answer them?' I asked.

'Of course,' she said. 'One must answer them.'

'After you have ascertained the truth of the facts,' I said, 'and the characters of the referees.'

'Of course,' she repeated, 'not without this. It can be no satisfaction to any sensible person to relieve cases of distress without previous inquiry.'

'Well,' I continued, 'shall we begin? Will you commence opening and reading?'

But once more the ceiling seemed to open, and once more a whole extravasated post office with unfathomable gulphs of letter bags showered in torrents down upon our heads. We were up to our knees in letters.

'We shall be suffocated,' I said. 'A second destruction of Pompeii! What a verdict for the coroner's inquest: "Found smothered and drowned in a shower of letters." But what is that noise?'

There were sounds, as of an approaching army; scuffling and rushing — as of hundreds pushing before each other to obtain the best seats at a show, or the first entrance to a refreshment room. I rose from my chair, waded through the sea of letters to the window, looked out and beheld the lawn thronged with eager, hungry-looking faces, some greedy, some covetous, some envious, some humble and in sorrow, some bold and rapacious. And more came trooping up the road. Other crowds issued from the shrubbery. At a distance appeared vast caravans from all

quarters of the globe—Persians, Egyptians, Hindoos, Esquimaux, Hottentots—all of them human beings—all of them our own flesh and blood, all of them therefore entitled to our sympathy, and calling for our inquiry into their cases, and a just and accurate appreciation of their merits and claims to patronage and relief.

'Are you prepared for this?' I asked Lady Livingham.

'Well,' she replied, 'I did not quite expect it.'

'Do you think the Bank of England,' I said, 'will be able to meet your draughts?'

'No,' was the answer, 'of course not the Bank, but the Fairy will be able. I am not afraid of that.'

'But how,' I said, 'is one to examine into the cases? How long do you think we have to live?'

'Oh!' she cried, 'they are rushing up the stairs—they are knocking at the door. Make them come in one by one, and tell them to be quiet, or I will send them all away.'

But before I could open the door it was burst in. A throng of needy applicants was propelled like an advancing wave, by the waves behind it. In vain the foremost ranks echoed to the rest, Lady Livingham's orders for silence, her commands that they should not press so—her promise that all should be heard and attended to in time. The table was upset; the room crammed; Lady Livingham driven into a

corner; myself choked with dust and dirt, and a most unsatisfactory effluvium. Those nearest to Lady Livingham, in their eagerness to fix her attention on themselves, seized her hands, clasped her knees, threw themselves into her arms. And as two old ladies of very dingy drapery and unsavoury aspect generally, were proceeding to express their gratitude and affection by a fervent and beslobbering kiss, Lady Livingham's firmness completely gave way.

'Oh,' she cried, as all the rest of the pill-takers had done before, 'how I wish I had not been such a fool!' And, lo! the room was cleared; the mob had dispersed; the deluge of letters had dried up; the table was restored to its position; and Lady Livingham seated on the sofa, though gasping for breath, was enabled to look me in the face, as I also seated myself at the desk, and asked if I should still enjoy the honour of being her amanuensis and her secretary.

'Oh,' she exclaimed, 'how vexatious! It was those two horrid women who overcame me. If it had not been for them, I should not have lost the pill. How vexatious!'

It was too pleasant an opportunity to be neglected of reading a superior lecture to a superior minded personage.

'Ah!' I said, 'Lady Livingham, you had not armed

yourself with sufficient patience and courage to bear the martyrdom of beneficence.'

'I cannot call beneficence martyrdom,' she said: 'to do good is the purest of enjoyments.'

'Well,' I replied, 'I will not deny that it has its pleasures, but it has also its pains; and the pains are often much greater than the pleasures, as you have experienced now. You have succumbed at once under one of its least annoyances, clumsy and unsavoury affection. I own it could not have been pleasant to find yourself driven into a corner, and besieged in your own room with a mob of importunate beggars. And I do not think,' I continued, 'that the contents of those letters would have been very pleasant reading.'

'No,' she replied, 'certainly not. But then there is the happiness of relieving misery.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'if it deserves to be relieved: but how many of those begging letters, do you suppose, came from impostors; how many not from intentional impostors, but from self-deceived persons, suppressing facts, and misrepresenting their own conduct and the conduct of others?'

'But then,' said Lady Livingham, 'think of the delight of making one good person happy.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'if you are sure of succeeding. But are you quite certain that you know how to distinguish a good man from a bad.'

'Everyone,' she exclaimed indignantly, 'knows that.'

'Not everyone,' I said. 'At least we are not always unanimous. English juries, and even English judges, sometimes find it difficult to decide such questions. The virtues of a Whig minister are very obscure to a Tory newspaper, as a Tory saint soon becomes a demon to a Whig. What,' I continued, 'is your opinion of Henry VIII., of Mary Queen of Scots, of William III., Oliver Cromwell? Or what do you think of the greatness and goodness of that last whitewashed monarch Frederick of Prussia? I suspect you and I should estimate them rather differently from their biographers and historians. You see there may be doubts.'

'Well,' she said, 'but at least there is a pleasure in receiving gratitude.'

'Great pleasure,' I replied, 'in feeling grateful, and great pleasure in making grateful returns, when we are able; but he who does kind acts in the hope of obtaining gratitude for his reward, is like a man running after his own shadow, certain never to overtake it.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lady Livingham, 'I shall say, like everyone else, you are always moralising.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I cannot help it. It is a foolish way I have of looking at things. I suspect the great cause of our blunders has been that we should have asked for a preparatory pill, something to clear our own system, before we commenced our course of active beneficence upon others. If there were such a pill;

if the Fairy could give us one! I wonder whether there is such a thing?'

'What thing?' asked Lady Livingham, with a symptom of irritation in her voice.

'I think,' I said, 'there must be several. I doubt if one pill could do for us all that we required. First, there must be one with a good deal of steel in it to harden our nerves, so that we should not throw up the work impatiently (I could not resist giving Lady Livingham a little stab), because two uninviting beldames wish to favour us with an unsavoury kiss. Then, I think, we should want a lotion for the eye, that we may be able to see into the bottom of men's hearts and know what they truly are. Indeed, I am not so sure that there may not be a defect in our eyes, which only a very good optician could set right; and which makes us mistake at times a fault for an excellence, and an excellence for a fault; and this, if not corrected, may cause great blunders; as when Lord Macaulay, for instance, makes a faultless hero of King William, or France erects statues of Voltaire: so, if you please, before we take any more pills of beneficence, we will try to procure a self-correcting one. And then,' I continued, 'if we added another, which would enable us to see all the consequences of all that we did, all the effects which would follow upon every possible cause, we should be able to ensure that what we intended should make men happy would

not make them miserable. In fact we must, I think, have an omniscient as well as an omnipotent pill. One without the other would only bring us into mischief.'

Lady Livingham looked startled and shocked.

'But you would deter anyone,' she said, 'from trying to do good.'

'Certainly not,' I replied. 'Trying to do good and trying to make people happy are operations as different as administering to a child a black dose or a lollipop. Though I am not so sure that we in general understand even the best mode of making people good.'

'But surely,' said Lady Livingham, 'you do not want us to employ ourselves in giving people pain, in running pins and needles into them.'

'No,' I said, 'certainly not. Still the pins and needles are sometimes necessary, as when you put the blister on poor Mrs. Aberleigh's back.'

'Of course,' she replied; 'but then I knew it would do her good.'

'You thought so,' I said; 'nay, perhaps you felt sure of it. But unhappily you made a mistake.'

'And so may any physician,' said Lady Livingham rather reluctantly.

'Yes, but it is one thing when a licensed physician, regularly authorised, makes a mistake, which he had no power to avoid, and when a lady without any

authority finds herself in a drawing-room with a supposed patient asleep on a sofa; and seeing a tempting back, saddles it without leave with a blister.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lady Livingham, very much disconcerted, 'you are running pins and needles into me, and you take pleasure in it.'

'No,' I said; 'I am applying a blister.'

'And who has authorised you?' she asked.

But I made no answer, for I did not feel quite certain.

'Well,' sighed Lady Livingham, 'it is a very disheartening process, this trying to do good. And if we must wait, as I suppose we must, till we are perfectly good ourselves, and perfectly wise, why we must abandon it altogether.'

'I think not,' I said. 'I should not like to see the boy behind the counter in the druggist's shop busy, in the absence of his master, with the powders and potions, and dispensing them to a crowd of poor people in the street. But I should have no objection to taking a pill, which he had made up for me by his master's direction, under his master's eye.'

'But,' persisted Lady Livingham, 'what is to be done with all that mass of misery, which lies round us in the world? I declare I cannot take up a paper without its making my heart bleed. There is always some frightful war, or plague, or misery of some kind. And when I am in London, and drive, as I

sometimes do, through the wretched streets in St. Giles's or Poplar, I come back, and almost sink down in despair. And if I am not to try to alleviate all this suffering till I am perfectly good and perfectly wise, which I never can be, what am I to do?'

'The answer to Lady Livingham's question,' said Uncle Peter, 'was a grave one. I will not give it now—neither did I give it fully then—for the breakfast-bell rang, and we prepared to go down stairs.'

'Ah!' sighed Lady Livingham, as she paused before leaving the room, 'how they will laugh at me, and how anxious they will be to know what you are going to do with your pill!'

'Ensure forgetfulness, for the first thing,' I said. 'I hope the flower-beds have not been trampled down by the crowd of applicants for your bounty. No'—and I looked out of the window—'everything is put straight; but the servants must have been astonished. I must leave them now to some other person. I have exhausted my own arguments, and must trust that some more potent rhetoric may be forthcoming from another quarter.'

This fear of the servants was the first thought in my mind, but notwithstanding Lady Livingham's benevolence, it seemed to weigh but little upon her. The dread of ridicule was the only thing which haunted her, though I assured her it was only a phantom, as the rest of the party had been too un-

successful themselves to criticise or condemn her. And certainly nothing could be more kind or considerate than her reception at the breakfast-table; though, when I watched the countenances around me narrowly, I could perceive a secret satisfaction at the discovery that even Lady Livingham's superior mind had failed to employ the pill to good account. Two persons were absent from the party. Lady Lloyd told me that she had seen Mrs. Beaumont, who had been most seriously annoyed, and was suffering under a severe headache. But she had sent her forgiveness to Emma, and a message to the Doctor, whom she fully exonerated from any complicity in the offence, and who, she hoped, would pardon her if anything had dropped from her inconsistent with their usual amicable relations and mutual esteem. The Doctor listened to the message through the keyhole of his bolted and double-locked door; but had been so thoroughly frightened, that he did not trust himself out of his own room. I am afraid I thought but little of them; my whole anxiety was concentrated upon the servants, and the possibility, now that the blinding effect of Lady Livingham's pill was at an end, that I might again be called upon to go through an ordeal of falsehood, equivocation, and sophistry, in order to convince them that the events of the morning were to be attributed entirely to natural causes.

Most thankful was I when Sir Lloyd himself undertook the task, and without waiting for any complaint to be made, summoned Gray to the library after breakfast, and in a private and confidential interview —which of course very much flattered Gray's vanity— expressed his own surprise at the singular occurrences which had been witnessed, but which were (he stated most truly) connected with Lady Livingham's benevolent schemes, and must therefore be accepted without comment. The sudden disappearance of the crowds, both of persons and letters, was, he said, as inexplicable to himself as to anyone else; he could almost believe that there was some optical delusion in it. He was waiting for an explanation, and had been assured that by the next day all would be made clear. In the meantime he trusted to Gray's good sense and right feeling to put a stop to any foolish gossiping and questioning in the servants' hall, and to induce the servants to wait patiently till Sir Lloyd himself could explain, as he was most desirous to do, all which now must have struck them as so remarkable.

Gray, thus trusted, was won over to Sir Lloyd's side, though not so entirely as to be without misgivings. The events of the previous day had, indeed, been obliterated, but there still remained in his mind that vague impression of something mysterious which had pervaded the household ever since our operations with the Fairy commenced. It required the full

exertion of Sir Lloyd's influence to calm and satisfy him; but the assurance that the marvels were connected with Lady Livingham, who had already acquired a reputation for knowledge far beyond the common, was so far efficacious that Gray, however doubtful, in his secret heart, of the real character of the marvels he had witnessed, left the library with a dignified air, and returned to the servants' hall, to impress upon the household the fact that he had been admitted to his master's confidence, and that, as he was contented to wait a day or two for the explanation of the wonders, of course they would be the same. So my first and greatest fear was at an end.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNCLE PETER'S PILL.

THE remainder of the day passed quietly. I spent an hour with Lady Lloyd in helping her to make out the statistics of her Blanket Club and Coal Fund, and went with her to the school, and catechised the children, and later in the afternoon I rode with Sir Lloyd to examine into the state of poor Biddy Wilkins's rather tumble-down cottage, which evidently required new thatching. I observed that no one made any remarks to me about my intentions in regard to the pill, and I felt flattered by the interpretation, which I put upon it myself, that they had full confidence in my discretion. Whether this was the true interpretation, I am not sure. Possibly, they knew that I possessed a certain firmness of temperament, which my enemies call obstinacy, and felt that it was idle to attempt any alteration in my plans, whatever they might be. But I have generally found in life, that it is often wise, and always comfortable, to put the most favourable

construction on indications, as well as expressions, of the opinions which our friends entertain of us. And I therefore accepted as a compliment, the general reticency of the party.

I confess I was at first very much tempted to put the pill at once into the fire, upon the general principle that the less one had to do with Fairies and Fairies' gifts the better. But I had a weakness—one which you must have already observed—a fondness for giving advice, for admonishing people as to their duties, and taking up generally a position as their instructor and corrector. And I could not resist the opportunity, though something within me was all the time making gentle remonstrances against it, of discharging my self-imposed censorial office, and impressing on the whole party a lesson on the subject of holding communication with Fairies. Having once given way to this temptation, it was easy to discover satisfactory reasons for yielding further still. In the first place, a pill and a Lethe wish seemed absolutely necessary on the servants' account, or they would undoubtedly continue very uneasy on the subject of the invasion which they had witnessed. The Post Office officials were labouring under no less amazement at a similar phenomenon in regard to their letters. And it would be necessary to suppress any gossip or rumours which must be spreading. Also, I argued with myself, that the pill was intended to be

swallowed, that it was evidently of a very mysterious nature, and not safe to be trifled with. If thrown into the fire, it might explode; if got rid of in any other way, it might cause an earthquake. It is never difficult to imagine possible contingencies of mischief to arise from doing that which we are not inclined to do. Accordingly, I ordered Wyatt to call me early, to provide the requisite quantity of water for dissolving the pill (I induced him to imagine that it was intended for some special ablutions); and I secured the gilt-edged letter paper, and studied very carefully to be clear and explicit in the declaration of my wishes. The first, I need not tell you, was the entire cancelling and obliteration of all the effects of our past proceedings, and the restoration of everything to the exact state in which it would have been had no pills ever been swallowed. In this was contained the wish, that I alone, of all the party, should ultimately, when all was over, retain any recollection of the occurrences, or even of the part which we had ourselves taken in them. 'And so successful was this wish,' said Uncle Peter, 'that, should you ever meet any of the party who were at that time visiting at Brooklyn, and ask them if they remember anything about the Fairy, and the pill, and the visit to Canada, and the cheering of Mrs. Aberleigh by the mob, and the disappearance of the lawyers, they will all say No.' From this it is evident that the Lethe wish was

perfectly successful and efficacious, and no other proof need be required that the whole story is true. No one knows or can know anything about it but myself, and that is enough for the world generally, and therefore you must not expect me to confirm what I say by any other testimony.

Having thus satisfied myself that I had duly fulfilled all the conditions required for the efficacy of the pill, I went down to breakfast composedly, and reciprocated the morning greetings, and the evident interest and curiosity of the party, by talking unconcernedly of the weather, and noticing the state of the crops;—a subject not very interesting, however, to Rosa, who ventured, after some time, to enquire how we should amuse ourselves during the day.

'Perhaps,' I said, 'Rosa, we are not yet quite at liberty to amuse ourselves. Perhaps—and I spoke significantly—there may be something in store for you to impress upon you all' (observe the *you*, not *us*; for I was acting as the censor of the party, charged with enforcing lectures by an admonitory discipline)—'to impress upon you all,' I continued solemnly, 'the fact which late events have rendered it most necessary to remember, that none but children wish to have anything to do with Fairies, and that grown-up persons who do so wish, are to be treated and punished like children.'

'You will imagine,' said Uncle Peter, 'the secret

satisfaction with which I administered this rebuke, and the serene composure with which I threw myself back in my chair, to witness the castigation which in my second wish I had thought it my duty to provide for all the offending members of the party who had been accomplices in the pills.' A dead silence fell on all, and though some of the faces exhibited a degree of impatience under my assumption of absolute wisdom and authority, they were, on the whole, overawed by the impressiveness of my manner. Sir Lloyd tried to shake off the feeling first, and asked for another cup of tea; but while Lady Lloyd was pouring it out, we heard a sharp sound, such as that which is produced by the descent of a schoolmaster's cane upon a little boy's back, and Sir Lloyd started up, and cried out, 'What is that? who is that?' and writhed himself round indignantly to seize the invisible castigator. But no one was to be seen.

'How dare you?' he exclaimed. 'What is the meaning——' But before he could finish his sentence another sharp sound was heard, and once more Sir Lloyd writhed, and tried to fling his hands in the direction of the blow, that he might seize the invisible offender.

I remained all the time unmoved, as a magistrate or a judge—I felt I was doing my duty. Before Sir Lloyd could proceed further in his indignant remonstrances, I observed the Doctor's right arm withdrawn

from his side, evidently by some invisible influence, and the hand with the open palm stretched out in that very stiff, and awkward, and shrinking attitude which is required by some schoolmasters when they propose to administer what is called a spat or pandy. And you will not be surprised, when you remember the Doctor's colloquy with me, to learn that, notwithstanding all his remonstrances, his writhings, his outcries, and his entreaties, he received not, like the benevolent Sir Lloyd, two only, but six good, hearty applications of the ferule, which I thought, as you will doubtless think, he most richly deserved.

The gentlemen I had easily provided for. Mr. Heathorn had from the first warned and protested, and I observed also (it was a phenomenon within my own experience perfectly unique) that he was the only one who did not claim any merit for having foreseen mischief from our folly. I had nothing to say to him, nor of course to Mrs. Heathorn, who had shown her good sense in the same manner. But with the chastisement of the other ladies I had a difficulty. I had never presided over a ladies' seminary, and knew nothing of the proper forms of torture to be applied in their education and discipline. The ferule was of course out of the question. And as I had no idea of what reformatory processes were employed in the young ladies' Fairy school, if any existed, and could not repose implicit confidence in the Fairy's discretion,

I was obliged to recall my memories of very early days, when, as I have already told you in my biography, I was still in petticoats, and placed under the instruction of the excellent Miss Cook, who kept not a seminary but a school, and admitted me to share her lessons in spelling and geography, with about a dozen young damsels from the neighbouring town. She was a woman of large frame, severe morality, and exuberant fancy in inventing punishments for all the various forms of juvenile depravity. She it was who, having one day provided for our dinner a large mutton pasty full of bones and fat, which I found it impossible to reconcile with the fastidiousness of my childish appetite, resolved to conquer the false delicacy, and made me (I recall the scene at this moment) sit before the coagulating grease of the *débris* of the yawning pie the whole afternoon school time, till I should eat and relish it. She it was who invented that black paper cap, with Dunce in large letters on the front, the dread of which so stimulated our memories in spelling and our accuracy in arithmetic. She it was who, when I had ensconced myself in a corner of the room, from which, unobserved and by means of crooked pins, I could launch paper pellets against Miss Smith the assistant, wreaked her vengeance on me by pinning me to her own gown, and compelling me to stand the whole afternoon under the glare of her tremendous eyes. And it was to her *répertoire* of pains

and penalties that I now had recourse to administer a salutary castigation to the offending ladies. I once more threw myself back in my chair with magisterial solemnity, and had the satisfaction of seeing Lady Lloyd, Mrs. Aberleigh, Miss Rosa, Emma, and even Mrs. Beaumont (for though she had taken no pill herself, she would have taken one if she could have ensured by it the due introduction of the competitive examination scheme), all five planted upon five wooden stools at the end of the room, and on their heads—not the black paper cap with Dunce on it—but a white paper one like a nightcap, with an erect tassel, and some bits of glittering tin on it, and an inscription on the front containing the opprobrious title of Fool's Cap. It was an exact copy of the one which Miss Cook had concocted for the heads of naughty children found playing in school time, or cutting their fingers by meddling with edged tools. The stools were high and narrow, the feet of the ladies dangled in the air ; their seat was hard, precarious, and uneasy ; and their aspect anything but dignified. I could not help thinking of Ulysses in the Odyssey stringing upon the rope a whole bevy of his offending handmaids. For Lady Livingham—the strong-minded, intellectual, criticising, superior-minded Lady Livingham—I had thought it necessary to provide a severer castigation, also invented by Miss Cook, to subdue pride and conceit; and to impress upon her, in future, humility and

modesty in pronouncing upon the mistakes of others. She also was decorated with the cap, and was led up by invisible hands into a corner, planted with her face to the wall, and then compelled to pat herself rather below the chest with both her hands, repeating, again and again, 'Down, down, proud stomach'—a very efficacious remedy for pride, which I recommend to all parents who have children with a temper that requires it.

'And now,' I said—addressing them all as a judge pronounces on convicted criminals—'now, I trust this salutary warning will have the effect of preventing any of you hereafter from ever cherishing exorbitant wishes, fancying you can improve the state of the world by indulging your own imagination, and entering into forbidden communication with fairies or witches, ghosts or goblins, turning tables, leaping hats, or rapping spirits. Remember, it is a great crime, and it will lead you into other crimes, especially that of telling stories. Look,' I said, 'at yourselves in the glass. See what a figure you cut with that Fool's Cap, and dangling upon those hard three-legged stools. And you, Lady Livingham, do not imagine yourself so superior to others, and take such delight in advising and prescribing, in lecturing and in blistering. You are weak and ignorant, as all the rest; and any superiority of experience and judgment which you may possess, only makes your faults the greater, and your punishment

the more severe. And you, Sir Lloyd,' I said, 'and Doctor Dean, do not imagine that it gave me any pleasure to inflict upon you that necessary castigation. But it will do you good—far more good than the severest words. It is for your benefit, and one day you will be grateful to me.' I closed with a few words of dignified but not too strong approbation to Mr. and Mrs. Heathorn; exhorted them to take warning by the fate of their friends, and was about to rise from my chair, satisfied that I had discharged my duty, and might now close the whole proceeding with due dignity of demeanour, and the maintenance of my usual superiority, but I was astonished to hear them all cry out, 'But what have you got on yourself? Look in the glass.' And as I turned round with amazement to a mirror at my side, I saw, with the deepest indignation, that some abominably impertinent person had put a Fool's Cap on my own head, only one much larger and grander than all the rest, with a more erect worsted tassel, and some tin balls, which wagged and rattled with every movement that I made.

But this was not all, nor the worst. I remember that among all the various inflictions by which the excellent Miss Cook used to endeavour to terrify us into the cardinal virtues, there was one which exercised on me the most awful influence. It was like the last and most exquisite torture of the Inquisition. I shrank under the dread of it, as the House of Com-

mons under the Speaker's threat to name a member. Only once did I ever see that punishment inflicted; and I feel at this moment the shudder of dread and disgust with which I gazed upon the offending victim. The crime for which it was invented was telling stories; and the punishment was emblematic and appropriate. It consisted of a black robe in which the offender was enveloped, whilst a piece of red cloth, cut into the shape of a tongue, and with the word Liar marked on it in black letters, was hung round the neck. The criminal was then compelled to stand in a corner of the room, fronting the whole academy, to be a mark for horror and contempt. Judge, then, of my indignation, when I found that some malicious, presumptuous hand had enveloped me in such a black gown, and fastened such a red appendage in front of my own neckcloth; and that, whilst I had been delivering my exhortation to the others, I had been all the time invested with these badges of disgrace myself. I was intensely angry, and demanded who had dared to take such a liberty. I forgot, at the moment, that my special injunctions in my second wish had comprised all who had been accomplices in the pill. I had made no exception for myself. I had never thought of myself in that light; and had been, in fact, so busy with the correction of my neighbours, that I had had no time to ask if I required any correction for myself. But the Fairies this time had not

only punctually executed my wishes, but filled up the gap which I had left, and were prepared to administer a salutary correction to me also, and one which, if not proportioned to the enormity of the offence, at least preserved some relation to the others. I remembered that I had been a consenting party to many of the pills; that I had not only taken one myself at the very time that I was planning punishments upon others for taking them, but had aided and abetted Rosa, had consented to accompany Mrs. Aberleigh, had made no resistance to Lady Lloyd's school; had co-operated more or less in the whole proceeding, instead of washing my hands of all communication with it, and quitting the house. And also (how the tips of my ears tingled, as I remembered it, and caught sight of the red tongue dangling from my neck!) I had told and had encouraged others to tell deliberate stories. I sank back in my chair with very acute shame. They all looked at me in silence, and I hung my head like a more than foolish school-boy, though my hair was grey. And then I found myself compelled to rise from my seat amid a profound silence, and the door opened for me, and I moved, or rather was led out as by invisible hands, while round me and behind me, and up in the air above me, I heard a confused whispering, and giggling, and flustering of voices, as of children seemingly much amused and delighted with some operation which they were

preparing to witness. Through the hall we paced, down by the servants' hall (it was to the servants chiefly that I had been telling stories, and they were all assembled to see me pass); and I moved unresistingly to a door, which opened into a small dark room, reserved generally for empty boxes and cases. I looked round: a space had been cleared from the boxes; a bench was arranged where, apparently, it was expected that I should kneel down; there were two stout young Fairy giants prepared to assist in carrying out the punishment, and there were two birch rods;—and, in fact, it was the only time my life that I had a good flogging, and probably you will all be inclined to agree that I richly deserved it.

What the effect of this general punishment might have been if I had not participated in it myself, I will not pretend to say. As it was, no one apparently felt at liberty, when I returned to the breakfast room, to find fault with me; but neither, I am sure, could anyone feel very cordially towards me, and by mutual though tacit consent we were all (of course I only mean the offenders) preparing to separate, and retire each to his or her apartment, there in silence and solitude to chew the bitter cud of our own penitent memories, when the sound of fifes and drums was heard in the direction of Pendragon forest and the waterfall.

The notes were rather of a noisy and boisterous,

than harmonious character, and were accompanied with sounds which came swelling on the breeze like the discordant cries of a mob, mixed with jeers, and jests, and laughs, and obstreperous addresses by no means complimentary, such as might surround a pillory in days when pillories were in fashion. It seemed, in fact, very much like what is vulgarly called rough music. As the noise advanced, the invisible pressure compelled us all to take our station at the window.

'What can it possibly be?' exclaimed Lady Lloyd, breaking for the first time the very awkward silence which reigned amongst us.

'I will confess at once,' I said; and I am sure the tone of my voice must have betrayed my sense of having been able to take a most satisfactory revenge. 'It is a procession with the Fairy. I have ordered her and her attendants to be drummed out of the parish and out of the county. I think we shall have but one feeling as to this wish.'

'The Fairy!' was the general exclamation; 'the Fairy who gave us the pills.'

'The beautiful Fairy who promised me my doll,' said Emma. 'And must Ariel go too, and Puck, and all of them?'

'Yes, all,' I answered solemnly; 'my order was that not one was to be left behind.'

'I am glad of it,' said Sir Lloyd.

'You were right, quite right,' echoed Mrs. Aberleigh.

'Well,' sighed Rosa, 'I don't quite feel that; she was extremely good-natured and generous.'

'Won't she do you some mischief in revenge?' propounded Mr. Heathorn, thoughtfully.

'Oh, I hope not!' exclaimed Mrs. Heathorn, trembling lest her husband should be involved in the effects of some notorious incantation. 'I entreat you don't provoke her.'

'I am not afraid,' I said; 'I have no dread of witches' threats or Fairies' vengeance, but I have a great dread of their promises and their presents. Their love is very formidable, but not their hate.'

'But she was so beautiful,' said Emma; 'and she had such a lovely green velvet dress, and a green bonnet and green gloves, and all the fairies with her were dressed in green trimmed with gold and silver.'

I did myself expect to see the beautiful Fairy Polypragmosyne in very elegant attire, enveloped in laces and in graces, which would powerfully affect the sympathies of the party, and probably even fascinate into respectful silence the uncomplimentary salutations which are intended to accompany to her or his destination the person who is to be drummed out of a parish or a regiment. I had my fears. For it is so hard to doubt the innocence of a beautiful com-

plexion; to suspect a graceful veil and bonnet of any mischief, to inflict any punishment on very small hands and feet, a very delicate voice, and a very graceful curtsey; I knew that if the Fairy, guilty as she had been of all our troubles, into which she had purposely tempted us, were to appear before us in a Mary-Queen-of-Scots cap, and address us in tremulous, melodious Italian, with a crystal tear standing in her diamond eyes, we should all give way, all kneel down and ask her forgiveness; and she would give us another phial of pills.

What therefore was my relief, when, as the procession showed itself issuing from the shrubbery upon the lawn before the windows, I found that all my fears were groundless! The procession was led by the village beadle. After him followed some of the noisiest and idlest boys of the town, who had borrowed the fifes and drums of the Volunteer corps, and made with them a rattling din of discord, which scarcely allowed us to hear our own voices. And immediately after them there followed, not a beautiful Fairy in green velvet, or, as she might have appeared, to excite our pity, in white muslin, with her hair streaming wildly down her back—like the heroine in the last scene of a tragedy; but an individual whom I at once recognised as an indisputable witch. I knew her by her wooden leg, her long horrid arms, her rusty bombazine gown, and crumpled black

bonnet,] her pattens, and red gingham umbrella. And draggling after her came some wretched dirty imps and urchins, who, I knew, must be the gentlemanly Ariel, the amusing Puck, and the rest of Emma's playfellows at the picnic at the waterfall; not to omit the faithful Bumble, but stripped of his livery and gold cane. A mob followed, hissing and hooting, and very much inclined, if the beadle with his awful staff had not at every moment turned round with menaces of destruction, to accelerate the witch's progress by the application of rotten eggs and mud, as well as by the discharge of contumelious epithets. I was relieved from much anxiety; for with ugliness, deformity, and dirt, there is little fear of sympathy, little danger of apology. A short time before I might have taken credit for the unexpected discovery, as a Chancellor of the Exchequer credits his administration with the merits of a plentiful harvest and an opportune rain. Now I spoke more humbly.

'Yes,' I said, 'there can be no mistake now; the Fairy Polypragmosyne shows herself in her true colours. We may be indeed thankful to have escaped from her.'

'You were right in having her drummed out of the county,' said Sir Lloyd; 'we might have known that a fairy is but a witch in disguise.'

'How horribly ugly!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd.

'Hideous,' added Rosa.

'I am so glad,' whispered Mrs. Heathorn to her husband, 'we had nothing to do with her!'

'I always suspected something,' said Mrs. Aberleigh.

'Yes,' said Sir Lloyd, 'how often I warned you not to take any more pills.'

'Yes,' I said, 'Sir Lloyd, but it was after you had taken your own.' For I could not refrain from giving him a little puncture, good and kind as he was.

'Look at her!' exclaimed Lady Lloyd; 'she is making signs to us, threatening us.'

And I saw the horrible old creature turn to us as the procession passed before the window, and shake one of her fists and her gingham umbrella at us.

'We had better come away,' I said, 'or the people may see us at the window, and imagine we have something to do with her. And I am not sure whether they might not think it right to drum us out of the parish too, as accomplices.'

We withdrew a little from view, but our eyes were still fixed upon the horrid old woman, as she slowly and unwillingly moved along, turning from time to time to look back upon us, and make threatening and contemptuous gestures.

The pills had been effective even for herself; but she had revenged herself by the only means in her power, the betrayal of her true character. We watched

and listened, as the noisy and disgraceful rout disappeared by degrees from view, half fearing, I suspect, in our secret hearts that some fatal catastrophe might be at hand. But looks and threats were all which now remained in the Fairy's, or rather the witch's power; and as the last shake of the gingham umbrella was seen at the turn of the plantation, the pressure which had invisibly but forcibly compelled us to remain at the window was released, a mist seemed to pass from our eyes, a cloud to vanish from the earth; and drawing a long sigh of relief, we shook each other's hands with a cordial grasp, and exclaimed as with one breath, 'Can we ever be thankful enough? It is all over.'

CONCLUSION.

UNCLE PETER finished his tale, but his auditors were only half satisfied. He had had four wishes in his power, and he had only used three. Why had he thrown away his privilege?

'I was afraid,' was the reply. 'I had already written down the three wishes, and had resolved what the fourth should be, when I looked up, and saw in the window that a poor little fly had just become entangled in a cobweb out of my reach. The sight happening to be connected with the object of my fourth wish, set me moralising, as is my wont. I began to think what might be the possible result if I were to order the Fairies to release the fly, as I had no power to do it myself; and the end of my cogitations was such serious alarm at the thought of meddling any more with things beyond my own sphere, that I threw down my pen, and sent off my gilt-edged sheet of paper to the great oak, with only three wishes in it. You think it strange, no doubt,' continued Uncle Peter —'perhaps you think I am exaggerating—but I am not. The reason why I did not make use of my fourth

wish was really fear of the consequences, and not the thought that it was wrong to have anything to do with fairies. I had indeed very nearly arrived at that conclusion; but it was convenient, and seemed even necessary, to ask the fairies to blot out all the memory of our proceedings; moreover, I enjoyed the idea of lecturing and chastising my friends; and I heartily wished to see the fairies drummed out of the parish; therefore my conscience did not trouble me much (though it did a little) when I wrote down the first three wishes; but I happened to have no particular inclination for a fourth, and therefore my conscience became more alive. I had become afraid of getting into difficulties if I meddled with human beings, and so I had resolved that, if I wished for anything, I would content myself with doing good to some poor animal or insect. The fly was the first living thing I saw; and, as I said, a consideration of the possible consequences prevented my going further.'

'But to release a poor little innocent fly from the grasp of a cruel, ugly spider,' was the general exclamation, 'surely nothing could be more natural and right!'

'The spider certainly, in my opinion, is ugly,' said Uncle Peter; 'yet ugly things must live; and to live, spiders must eat; and in the present unhappy state of things upon earth, they must take the life of flies. If the butcher refused to kill a sheep for me because I was not handsome; or if I happened to be fishing, and

had hooked a trout, and a man were to come by and say, "Oh, sir! you are anything but beautiful, and I must take that trout off your hook and fling it into the river again," I don't think I should like it. And as regards cruelty, I am not so deeply acquainted, as you all seem to be, with the virtuousness of flies and the wickedness of spiders. But I would just ask you what you think of yourselves, when you have a roast leg of mutton for dinner? I confess, for my own part, that I don't feel as perfectly guiltless of carnivorous propensities as doubtless the visitors to the Zoological Gardens feel, when they moralise on the greediness of the boa constrictor, and denounce the barbarity of the python in devouring live rabbits.'

We were answered, but only in part. Uncle Peter had not yet told us whether any real harm could have resulted from letting the fly loose.

'I did not know then, and I don't know now,' was his reply. 'And it was precisely this "don't know" which frightened me. I recalled a very striking lesson which I had once received on the possible consequence of even saying, "It is a fine day." I was crossing a pass in the Alps over the snow, and I was just about to say those very words, when the guide made a sign to stop me. He told me afterwards that at that particular spot it was most dangerous to speak. The slightest motion of the air caused by uttering any words, might bring down upon us an avalanche. You will see from this what I mean by the "don't knows"

of life which are so fearful. I could not tell but that, by letting that fly loose, I might have produced famine.'

We all started. It seemed that he must be laughing at us. But he continued gravely:—

'It is quite possible. There are whole classes of plants in the vegetable world which never come to maturity unless the pollen necessary for their fructification is brought to them by certain insects which convey the dust on their wings, and scatter it over the plant. These insects feed upon other insects; and if they cannot find their food in a particular district, they fly away, and never come near the vegetable. Now a whole swarm of insects may be contained in one, as whole shoals of fish are contained in the roe of a herring; and you will see therefore that by killing one insect I might destroy a swarm, by destroying that swarm drive away the other swarm, accustomed to feed upon them, and in consequence prevent the pollen from reaching the vegetable, which thus would never come to maturity; and if we suppose this vegetable to be the food of a district, you will see that a famine would be the result. This of course is only an imaginary illustration. But the potato famine was, I believe, really caused by a sort of fungus or toadstool which grows with incredible rapidity from a single germ; and some insects are made to feed upon these germs, and destroy them; and such a fly as I spoke of may, for aught I know to the contrary, prey upon these insects. And so if I had let it loose, it might have flown off

and swallowed an insect, which would otherwise have eaten the germ of the fungus, and have prevented the spread of the blight, and therefore of the famine. Remember, I do not say this or that would have happened; but I do not know that it would not. And I do know that no eye but One can see all the consequences of the slightest act; that causes are linked to effects, and effects to causes, in such a wonderful way, that one stands before the prospect amazed and terrified. We roll pebbles down the side of a quarry, and one pebble dislodges a small stone, and that a larger one, and that a shower of others, which, as they fall, dislodge the foundations of a loose rock; and the rock thunders down on a cottage, and the people living in it are crushed to death.

'It is a grave thought, but a true one, that in this life we are always standing upon the edge of a precipice, with an avalanche of rocks above and below us, ready to thunder down, if we only speak or dislodge a pebble. And therefore it behoves us to be cautious.

'You are not quite satisfied,' continued Uncle Peter. 'I see it by your countenance. You still think that it is sad that the animal creation should suffer and prey upon each other. And it is sad. But we tread upon the verge of a great mystery, and when we think of it, perhaps it is best to remember the "don't knows" of life, and leave them to the merciful Providence which created them.

'We are told that there will come a time when they shall live together without fear and without conflict; and now, in this present state of being, we must be assured that there is some good and wise reason for permitting them to support themselves as they do, by feeding on each other, though it involves suffering and blood-shedding, pain and death. Perhaps it may be to accustom us to that strange fact, that the life of one being should depend on the death of another. Is there anything else I have left unanswered?'

'Yes; Lady Livingham's question: "What was she to do when oppressed by the extent of human misery? Can it be right to leave our fellow-creatures to themselves, and make no effort for their happiness, because we are ignorant on what their happiness depends?"'

Uncle Peter's reply was spoken in deep earnestness.

'I should grieve indeed,' he said, 'if I thought my foolish story had given rise to any such idea. Surely we are bound not to let a day pass without efforts to make others happy, or, in other words, trying to do good; but then it must be in cases within our reach and our means, lying under our own eye, or brought before us by authorised persons, and in which distress can be relieved, not by a wish that costs us nothing, but by a real sacrifice. And even as regards cosmopolitan benevolence, I should be the last person to sneer at it when it is sincere. But may

it not be better for the world, and will it not certainly be happier for ourselves, when we long to confer vast benefits on mankind, or even on particular individuals, to put our wishes into the form of prayers to One who is—what we are not—perfectly wise and perfectly good? The next best thing to being able to do good ourselves, is the having some Friend who possesses the power, and who will always attend to us, and cannot make a mistake. And to bring cases of distress before such a Friend is the happiest of employments, for it is doing good in the safest and most certain way. The world indeed may not be reformed or governed or made happy according to our plans, because those plans would, in reality, only tend to make it more miserable; but if we ask in faith, we shall be answered in love; and if we pray for the alleviation of misery, our petition will be answered in the way which will ultimately prove best. God does not work a miracle to put an end to suffering, but He stirs up the hearts of His creatures to exert themselves for its removal by legitimate means.

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